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Coordinadora

Rewriting traditions
Contemporary Irish Fiction

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LETRAS MODERNAS

FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO

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Aurora Piñeiro

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Introduction
The Unlimited Cartographies of Contemporary Irish Fiction

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> Maps are the most condensed humanized spaces of all… They make the landscape fit indoors, make us masters of sights we can't see and spaces we can't cover.
>
> Robert Harbison, *Eccentric Spaces*.

The literary landscape of contemporary Irish fiction is an extraordinary one; it is vital, multifarious and difficult to label. Within the multiplicity that characterises this narrative universe, we find numerous examples of novels and short stories that are rewritings of previous and well-known pieces, this is, textual transpositions, where the adjective *textual* is meant to stand for what Roland Barthes described as a text: "that social space which leaves no language safe, outside, nor any subject of the enunciation in a position as judge, master, analyst, confessor, decoder."[1] In a similar fashion, the transpositions in point trigger an experience of pleasure without separation, a *jouissance* that arises from the possibility of readers

[1] Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text", 1475.

to write and re-write the texts in a utopian space "where no language has hold over any other, where languages circulate."[2] It was also under the spell of this spirit of circulation that the present book came to life: as a collection of texts where researchers, translators and artists wrote and co-wrote pieces that promote dialogues across languages and cultures. In doing so, they (as well as the Irish artists whose *oeuvres* are studied here) celebrate and, at the same time, defy the notion of tradition itself.

In recent decades, varied definitions of rewriting have been an inspiration behind literary criticism and creative endeavours as well. Gerard Genette coined the term hypertextuality to describe a form of transposition with a "relationship uniting a text B (…the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (…*the hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not [necessarily] that of commentary".[3] As a follow-up to Genette's reflections, Matei Calisnescu added that rewriting "would involve a reference of some structural significance (as opposed to a mere mention or passing allusion) to one or more texts".[4] Both theoreticians acknowledge that rewriting is an ambitious type of textual transformation and also agree that many hypertexts are "actually mosaics of rewriting"[5] which call upon multiple hypotexts. Furthermore, Calinescu emphasises the potentialities of postmodern rewriting as "a frame for critical discussion,"[6] which makes it complicit in the presence of metatextuality in contemporary prose.

When it comes to hypotexts or sources, it is also important to mention that they come in a variety of shapes and sizes: they frequently are of a diverse provenance and, this way, contemporary rewritings expand the possibilities of fiction as a creative arena where many languages, artistic and otherwise, interact. But it is equally worth noting that the relationships between sources and new texts are of a complex nature and change in accordance with their degrees of significance. Sometimes the new works establish a (partially) respectful connection with their points of departure, while others intendedly distance themselves from their hypotexts, and do so with several transgressive purposes. In contemporary fiction, these two attitudes frequently coexist, and postmodern parodies (among other literary modes) are a case in point, as they "both incorporat[e] and challeng[e] that which [they] parod[y]."[7] This paradoxical attitude has been described

[2] *Idem*.
[3] Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, p. 5.
[4] Matei Calinescu, "Rewriting", p. 245.
[5] *Ibid*., p. 247.
[6] *Ibid*., p. 248.
[7] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 11.

by several artists as a liberating strategy when it comes to the thorny matter of dealing with the past, be it in the form of a literary past or in the countless embodiments of cultural traditions.

Likewise, contemporary art acknowledges its dialogue with (or sometimes dependence on) previous sources in diverse ways. Some critics believe that it is possible to identify different subspecies of rewritings depending on how explicitly these works state their hypertextual nature. When it comes to varieties of rewriting such as adaptations and appropriations, Julie Sanders claims that many film, television or theatre adaptations of canonical works of literature "openly declare themselves as an interpretation or re-reading of a canonical precursor",[8] while in appropriations "the intertextual relationship may be less explicit, more embedded."[9] For Sanders, in both cases, "what is often inescapable is the fact that a political or ethical commitment shapes a writer's, director's, or performer's decision to re-interpret a source text."[10] Sanders' approach to adaptations and appropriations may be debatable in more than one sense, as the contributions in this volume do prove, but it clearly points at rewritings as anything but homogenous. Heterogeneity is, in fact, one of the celebrated features of the contemporary reshaping of artistic or other manifestations of the past. And neither oblique nor explicit acceptance of their varied relationships to previous discourses prevents them from being powerful textual forces in their own right.

Whether by a process of imitation, assimilation or rejection, Irish fiction written in English during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries teems with examples of the finest forms of rewriting. *Ulysses* (1922) by James Joyce is paradigmatic when it comes to references from the first half the last century. This novel is indeed a mosaic of rewritings, and it is both provoking and intimidating for readers who accept its invitation to identify the polygenetic hypotexts that were incorporated and transformed in Joyce's miraculous articulation of textual labyrinths. If only as a rewriting of Homer's *Odyssey*, though this is an extremely reduced approach, that would be enough to justify Sander's comment on the house of fiction Leopold Bloom inhabits: "*Ulysses* is a potent reminder of the rich possibilities of the adaptive technique and of readings alert to the politics of appropriation, but it is also a fine example of the sense of play that many

[8] Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, p. 2.
[9] *Idem*.
[10] *Idem*.

theorists have stressed as central to the adaptive instinct."[11] Abundance does characterise Joyce's writings, as it was expressed, more than once, by Samuel Beckett: "I realised that Joyce had gone as far as one could in the direction of knowing more, [being] in control of one's material. He was always adding to it; you only have to look at his proofs to see that."[12] This accumulative technique that Beckett decided to distance his own late writings from encompasses a myriad of sources that are literal and partially quoted in *Ulysses*, or resonate in *Finnegans Wake* (1939) as another instance where the Irish artist showed that rewriting is characterised by playfulness as well as informed by a sense of similarity and difference between texts. No wonder several contributors to the present volume chose to devote their articles to the writings by Joyce, and thus analysed several ways in which his works are hypertextual but have also become hypotexts lurking within or openly announced as sources for the compositions by many other contemporary artists, including those by Donal Ryan or the musical explorations by John Cage, just to mention a few, and also gesture at the fact that these dialogues overflow the borderlines of both the literary and national territories.

Rewriting Traditions. Contemporary Irish Fiction is divided into three main parts. Part I is composed by nine articles that study (re)writings published by Irish authors from 1914 to 2016, thus slightly exceeding the time span of a century: a hundred and *two* years as an interval that resists standard ways of expressing duration and, at the same time, pays an oblique tribute to the *Arabian Nights*, distorting the reference as expected in a book about contemporary rewritings.

The first two articles in this section emphasise the multi-layered dialogue between Joyce's novels and music as a creative principle; and, also, musical appropriations as an intermedial art form in its own right, respectively. In "Musical Cartography. The Narrative Structure of 'Sirens'", Luz Aurora Pimentel explores Joyce's rewriting of the *Odyssey* as a superposition of the Homeric world of the Mediterranean on to the map of Dublin via the strategy of *narrative cartography*: a dimension of meaning that is paratextual, "planted by the text, but actualized only by the reader." Furthermore, she studies the procedure of juxtaposition as the way in which Joyce escaped the syntagmatic prison of language, and as a technique that the author himself called the *labyrinth*. But as an extra layer in the analysis of the Joycean *pièce de résistance*, Pimentel proposes that the

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[12] Samuel Beckett *apud* James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame*, p. 352.

Irish author turned the narrative labyrinth he had created in "Wandering Rocks" into a labyrinth of sound in the opening pages of "Sirens", thus articulating not only a narrative but also a *musical cartography*. This ambitious reading that combines linguistic, topographic and musical paradigms is followed by Susana González Aktories' article, "Variations on a Joycean Theme: John Cage's Readings, Re-writings, More Re-readings and Visitations of *Finnegans Wake*". González Aktories studies the interconnectedness of Joyce's writings with the art of music and pays special attention to the visitations and appropriations of *Finnegans Wake* that John Cage conducted throughout his mature period as a composer and interpreter. In Cage's mesostics, for example, González Aktories analyses the way in which some signs are manipulated by the artist and transformed into textual interventions on a visual level, which reinforces the readers' certainty that they are facing a random, deliberately deconstructed recreation of *Finnegans Wake*. And in relation to *Roaratorio*, she describes how Cage, guided by Joyce's own musical references, managed to conceive a different experience of the novel, one that was condensed in a one-hour piece and which required a materialised listening of spaces, situations, and places as they were referred to in *Finnegans Wake*. González Aktories carefully analyses the strategies employed by the American composer in order to create these dense re-visitations to the last work published by Joyce, and approaches them as intermedial re-appropriations that have transcended the very text by multiplying their own interpretive possibilities, as well as their own readings and decodings.

One more article in this book is centred on *Finnegans Wake*. In "'The boarder incident prerepeated itself': A Study in Conflict", Terence Killeen explores issues of borders, identity and conflict in Joyce's last novel. The article is divided into two main sections. In the first one, Killeen argues that borders are invariably sites of conflict in this novel, this is, the places where rival systems and practices collide. Examining some of the textual sources of these conflict situations in *Finnegans Wake*, the article shows how random and unexpected they are, frequently deriving from newspaper reports of very petty, often comic, Irish encounters, and how Joyce reshaped these materials to stage emblematic incidents which take nothing less than all history in their purview. After the analysis of this specific type of rewriting, in the second section, Killeen shifts the focus from issues of conflict to issues of persecution. The article argues that the book's principal "character", HCE, is an exemplary scapegoat figure, reviled and mistreated at many turns by the city to which he has come as an immigrant. This proposition also involves a new stress on the otherness of HCE

as alien, as intruder into an established order. This sense of HCE as a predestined social victim is reminiscent in some respects of Leopold Bloom in that capacity (a self-referential and also insistent character reformulation), and gives the book, according to Killeen, a vital human dimension that ultimately redeems it from any charge of aloof indifference to the reality of suffering in the world as it is.

After the articles that deal with two of the most famous novels by Joyce, this volume offers two more contributions which approach Joyce's renowned collection of stories, *Dubliners*, as a hypotext for truly contemporary hypertexts that stay within the orbit of short-story writing, though they in many ways defy the halo of the canonical that surrounds the original. In 2014, the celebrations of the centenary of Joyce's *Dubliners* included the launching of *Dubliners 100*, a collection edited by Thomas Morris, who invited 15 contemporary Irish writers to (re)write each a story. The only restrictions consisted in preserving the original title of the tale each writer was assigned and the fact that the editor also kept the order of appearance of the stories in the book. Beyond that, each writer was granted freedom to articulate whatever type of dialogue with the source he or she found pertinent. For the sake of the analysis on contemporary Irish rewritings in our present volume, Hedwig Schwall wrote the article "Rewriting *Dubliners*: Parent-Child Relations in James Joyce's and Donal Ryan's 'Eveline'." According to Schwall, Donal Ryan's version of "Eveline" was outstanding in the clever ways in which he rewrote the story of this girl who wanted to break out of the domestic misery she found herself in. Not only did he thereby break the boundaries of the cultural context, transferring the story from the 1900s to the twenty-first century, but Ryan also morphed the parent-child relations as he transferred the hysteric structures of Joyce's Eveline to his protagonist's mother. In her analysis of both short stories, Schwall highlights how postmodern narratives move their focus from character to relationships, and does so by using the psychoanalytic theories of Nestor Braunstein, Paul Verhaeghe, Lucien Israel and Elisabeth Bronfen. In the article that follows Schwall's and partially converses with it, "'Alight and burnt to the ground': Fire as a Metaphor of Rewriting in *Dubliners 100* and *Spill Simmer Falter Wither*", Carolina Ulloa analyses three contemporary works in which fire is used as a metaphor of rewriting. For Ulloa, the dual disruptive and reconstructive quality of fire mirrors the also dual dynamics of parodic rewritings as works that both pay homage and establish a critical distance with their sources. It is in light of these ideas that she approaches Patrick McCabe's "The Sisters" and Peter Murphy's "The Dead" in *Dubliners 100*, as well as the novel

Spill Simmer Falter Wither by Sara Baume. In the section of her article devoted to Baume's novel, she calls upon varied hypotexts, some of which belong to the Irish literary tradition, but also reads this novel in relation to an American source that might not be seen as much of an obvious antecedent, thus her proposal, as well as Schwall's dealings with transferred hysteria structures, offers an intrepid and refreshing approach to the texts in point.

The departure from the Joycean sphere of influence that initiated with the second half of Ulloa's article is furthered on by Hedda Friberg-Harnesk's "Waters, Islands, and Insular Minds: Connection and Division in Sebastian Barry's Sligo Novels". Friberg-Harnesk states that in today's multifarious and multicultural field of Irish literature written in English, Sebastian Barry's fiction has been rightly praised, not only for its lyrical language and masterly weaving of histories – individual, familial, and national – but also for the heart in them. His characters are, according to Fintan O'Toole, "'history's leftovers, men and women defeated and discarded by their times.'" There is also, in them, an intriguing fluidity of borders, a blurring (and, in this sense, a reshaping) of boundaries of nation, race, and sexual orientation. In her article the focus is on water-related elements in Barry's novels *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* (1998), *The Secret Scripture* (2008), *The Temporary Gentleman* (2014), and *Days Without End* (2016) and their relationship to issues of connectedness and separateness.

In "Humour and the Gods: Reshaping Traditions in *The Infinities* by John Banville", Aurora Piñeiro describes Banville's rewriting of the myth of Amphitryon in *The Infinities* (2009) as a comic work in which different forms of humour (irony, sarcasm, the burlesque) serve the purpose of unsettling or resignifying varied philosophical and literary notions: the idea of origin, the conventions of classical and Shakespearean comedy, the assumptions about stock characters in the Irish big house novel and the Banvillean canon itself. The central aim of her article is to analyse the way in which the Irish author reimagines these traditions in a postmodern parodic fashion in which the use of ironic inversions becomes a strategy to explore the themes of the self, the art of writing, and the power of laughter to destabilise "the given" when it comes to narratives of the past.

And in "Writing(s) and Rewriting(s). Double Traditions in the Fiction of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne", Giovanna Tallone examines Ní Dhuibhne's pervasive use of her native Irish tradition and how it merges with the wider spectrum of the European ones in terms of intertextuality, imagery and plot at large. According to Tallone, Ní Dhuibhne's fiction is often tightly intertwined

with her work as a professional folklorist. In fact, one of the specific features of her writing is the ability to create new stories out of old legends of the Irish folklore, an experimentation that has underlain her writing since her 1988 short story "Midwife to the Fairies" and has continued with the whole structural organization of her 1999 collection *The Inland Ice*. In her particular approach to the rewriting of an old story, Dhuibhne juxtaposes the old one and its modern counterpart, thus creating a text in which pretext and aftertext coexist. However, besides the massive exploitation of the Irish tradition, Ní Dhuibhne also looks at a wider European one. In fact, as Tallone explains, her 2007 novel *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* is a 21st-century version of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* which also incorporates Irish local lore. This again happens in some of her short stories. For example, "Summer's Wreath" reconstructs and rewrites the background that led to the composition of Katherine Mansfield's *In a German Pension*; "The Woman with the Fish" rewrites Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog"; "Emma Jane" is a conscious rewriting of Joyce's "Eveline"; while features of the Gothic tradition underlie stories like "Illumination" and "Goldfinch in the Snow". Tallone's article indeed covers a lot of (literary) ground and invites readers to explore Dhuibhne's contemporary oscillations between the local and the global.

Finally, Ana Elena González Treviño's contribution connects with Tallone's explorations as she also analyses the presence of motifs and tropes from a well-known European fairy tale in a contemporary Irish novel. In her article "Biscuits at Grandma's and Other Family Horrors: Hansel and Gretel in *The Gathering* by Anne Enright", she studies the sophisticated ways in which Enright faced the challenge to represent child abuse as a major theme in *The Gathering* (2007) and states that Enright's solution is both ironic in its allusiveness and imaginative in its own right, combining avant-garde narrative non-linearity with a semi-encoded fairy tale. González Treviño equally argues that "Hansel and Gretel" provides a much needed shorthand for the dynamics of abuse, and that some of its components pepper the novel to provide both the narrator and the reader with a code for better grasping the situation. Her reading foregrounds, among other aspects, the compelling reformulation of the characters of the witch and the ogre, and the motif of the sugary treats which Enright incorporates into Veronica's narrative of the past, as the protagonist of the novel attempts to deal with the experiences of trauma and loss.

The articles gathered in the first part of *Rewriting Traditions* show not only the abundant presence of rewriting as a technique in Irish fiction but also the wide spectrum of strategies and attitudes adopted by writers and

composers when it comes to dealing with literary or cultural heritage. In part II, this volume offers a different approach to the notions of rewriting or appropriation. This section includes three excerpts from prose works generously shared with us by three contemporary Irish writers: Mary Costello, Claire Keegan and Sara Baume. In the case of Mary Costello, the fragment is from her latest novel, *The River Capture*, published in 2019. Claire Keegan's excerpt comes from *Small Things Like These*, a short novel; and Sara Baume's fragment was selected from an unpublished hybrid essay titled *Wisdom*. These three pieces of contemporary Irish writing are presented here in their original language, English, and followed by translations into Spanish by Aurora Piñeiro, Jorge Fondebrider and Mario Murgia. After each translation, readers will find an essay, written by the translator (and also translated into English either by the same or another translator), on the experience of translating one of these specific excerpts, the personal chronicle on how a translator is seduced by the writings of a particular artist, or the art of translation itself as one more form of rewriting or transcreation.

The last piece included in part II was written by Pía Laborde-Noguez and Adriana Toledano Kolteniuk. Partly a chronicle of an artistic adventure, and partly a meditation on language, performativity and collective creation, their contribution represents a different take on the notion of rewriting, as it deals with the translation into Spanish and the staging, for a Mexican audience, of the drama adaptation of *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing*. This extraordinary novel by Eimear McBride was published in 2013, and Annie Ryan reshaped this fiction into a dramatic work in 2015. Adriana Toledano, as the text translator; Pía Laborde, as the actress who played the role of the Girl; together with the other members of Dolores, decided to take up the challenge of staging *Una niña es una cosa a medio formar*, which premiered on 3 August, 2019 at the Tamayo Museum of Contemporary Art in Mexico City.

The staging of *Una niña es una cosa a medio formar* was a first-class event that implied the articulation of a collective art project and added one more layer of complexity and beauty to the previous creative achievements by McBride and Ryan. The Dolores team did manage to convey the experience of loss, grief and alienation that are present in the original novel and the play, and the essay by Laborde-Noguez and Toledano delves into accumulative layers of rewriting, but does so with an extra defining feature: a deliberate emphasis on physicality, on how all the forms of appropriation implied in this staging result into a bodily experience.

Finally, in part III, *Rewriting Traditions* includes nine sections with study assignments and further readings which were designed by the authors of each article in the first part of the book. These contributions aim at providing researchers, teachers, students and readers interested in Irish literature with self-study materials or teaching aids that expand the critical views presented in the articles and promote further dialogues about creativity and rewriting in relation to contemporary Irish fiction, but also other artistic endeavours both in English and Spanish. We do hope these sections invite readers to produce their own writings and rewritings on matters Irish and Latin American, and thus push forward the critical and creative conversation which inspired the writing of the present book.

Colum McCann beautifully suggests that "for all its imagined moments, literature works in unimaginable ways."[13] The Irish novels, short stories and essays discussed and translated in this volume show the unpredictable, provoking and multiple ways in which authors engage with artworks from the past and transform them into new, precious landmarks on a contemporary map that indeed tells of unlimited cartographies.

[13] Colum McCann, "Author's Note", in *Thirteen Ways of Looking*, p. 243.

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PART I
ARTICLES ON REWRITING TRADITIONS

Musical Cartography.
The Narrative Structure of "Sirens"

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Luz Aurora Pimentel

Nowadays, the web is teeming with sites projecting *Ulysses* on to a map of Dublin. Some, conventionally, trace perambulations and itineraries in multicoloured lines; others sprinkle all sorts of iconic marks, such as cameras, wine glasses, and beds, right on top of an ordinary tourist map of Dublin, thus blending city sights with Joycean locations; yet others, transform both the parallel and meeting episodes between Stephen and Bloom into a London Underground map, complete with *connecting stations*![1]

Back in the very early seventies of the last century, however, when I developed a mania for Joyce, these narrative *cartographic* activities were an oddity, an eccentricity at best; now they seem to have become the rage. But the seeds of all these virtual cartographic projections of *Ulysses* are to be found *in the text itself*. Unlike Dickens or Balzac, Joyce does not

[1] The following references are illustrative: Ordnance Survey Ireland and Government of Ireland, "*Ulysses*. Map of Dublin" [online], on *Irlandaonline.com*. <https://www.irlandaonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/ULYSSES-MAP.pdf>. [Accessed: 24 May, 2020].
Veruska Anconitano, "James Joyce's *Ulysses* Route Through Dublin" (online), on *The Foodellers. Food & Travel*. <https://thefoodellers.com/en/james-joyces-ulysses-route-dublin>. [Accessed: 24 May, 2020].
Frank Jacobs, "518-Mapping Bloomsday", in *Big Think*, 14 June, 2011. <https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/518-mapping-bloomsday#dbc62>. [Accessed: 24 May, 2020].

describe the city; he just *names* its streets, shops and monuments, obsessively declining them in a list; but, strictly speaking, never *describing* them. In some episodes this declension of names is so insistent that the reader is practically invited to locate those street names on the map, pinpoint them one after the other, trace lines between them, draw a figure in consequence. When all these episodes are projected on to the map, significant figures do appear. And then, suddenly, we realize that there is another dimension of meaning in *Ulysses*: a *cartographical dimension*, planted by the text, but actualized only by the reader. This is what I have called *narrative cartography*, a dimension of meaning that is, strictly, *paratextual*:[2] that is to say, the virtual map is not the text or in the text, yet the figures drawn by dint of the incessant naming of streets, monuments, etc., create a dimension of meaning that, although *not in* the text, complements and enriches it. For example, the funeral cortege in the "Hades" episode starts in the southeast of the city and proceeds towards Prospect cemetery, in Glasnevin, to the northwest of Dublin. Joyce deliberately makes the cortege cross four bodies of water —the Dodder River, the Grand Canal, the Royal Canal and the River Liffey— bodies of water reminiscent of the rivers of Hades in the Homeric epic narrative. Thus, due to the Odyssean correlates, another map, a mythical one, has been projected on to the urban space of Dublin. Meantime, across several episodes, the slow, erratic, and hazardous course of the Elijah 'throwaway' is carefully traced as it flows on the equally mythic river, Anna Livia Plurabelle: the Liffey River. As it follows its course down the river, the 'throwaway' flows out to sea (the red arrows on the map), as unpredictable as life, cutting across the path of death towards Hades (the purple line drawn from southeast to northwest), and thereby drawing a significant *cross*, even if slanted (figure 1).

On the map, this virtual cross establishes what we might call *the coordinates of life and death* around which all the other activities evolve. This is particularly evident in the "Wandering Rocks" episode: the vice regal cavalcade moving from the southwest of Dublin towards the east (the red line); Father Conmee walking out of Dublin from the north but also moving eastwards (also in red) —both royal and ecclesiastical powers literally *oriented* to the east where they belong, Westminster and Rome. In this manner are the routes of life, death and the earthly powers that be, traced on the map, *and they make sense*, paratextually. The text itself, however,

[2] *Vid.* Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, p. 3.

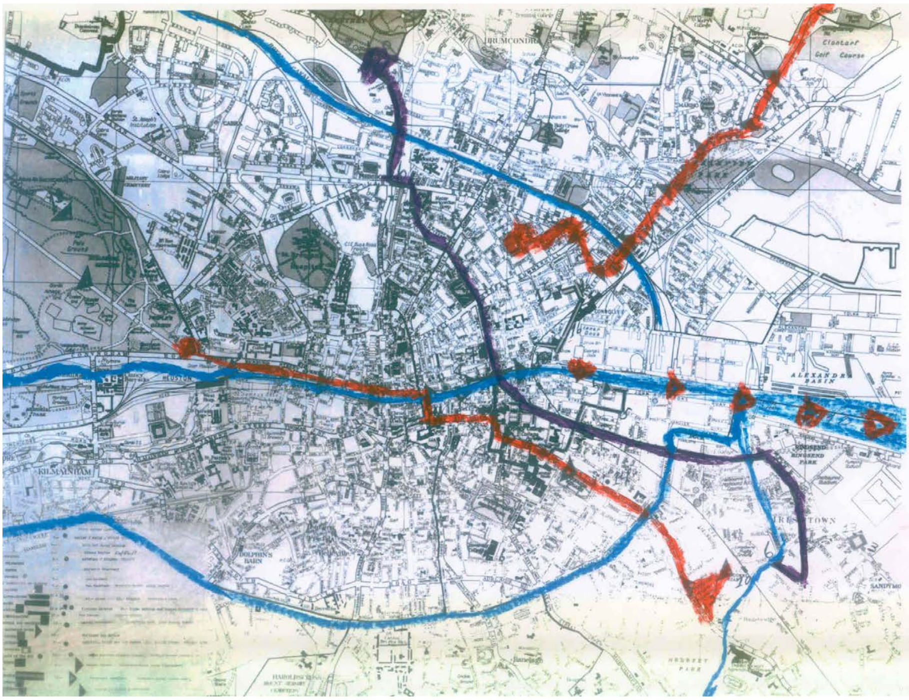


Figure 1. The various routes in Ulysses: *the course of the Elijah* throwaway *on the Liffey River (red arrows); the funeral cortege in "Hades" (purple line); Father Conmee walking out of Dublin and the vice regal cavalcade in "Wandering Rocks" (red lines). This representation of the various routes in* Ulysses *was created by Pimentel around 1973. A regular city map was used as the source for an enlargement or blow up upon which Pimentel drew the Joycean routes. This visual aid has been, since then, used for teaching purposes at the English Department at* UNAM. *We consider it a cultural artifact and thus decided to reproduce it here for archival purposes, besides its evident function as an illustration of the analysis in this article.*

does not say anything about this suggestive dimension of meaning, *but the map does*; it is strictly a *cartographical meaning*.

Yes, narrative cartography. If, by definition, *cartography* means "the art and science of graphically representing a geographical area, usually on a flat surface such as a map or chart", if this representation "*may involve the superimposition of political, cultural, or other nongeographical divisions onto the representation of a geographical area,*"[3] then this is exactly what

[3] Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Cartography", par. 1.; all italics, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

Joyce is doing: superimposing a virtual map, of a cultural and political nature, even of a mythical nature, on to the existing map of Dublin. Joyce's rewriting of the *Odyssey* could not be more oblique: the superposition of the Homeric world of the Mediterranean on to the map of Dublin is very ingenious and is nothing but the result of this strange form of what I have called *narrative cartography*.

In the tenth episode, the "Wandering Rocks", Joyce establishes an interesting narrative technique to account for simultaneity: his *spatio-temporal montages*. In the wake of Flaubert, Joyce makes of *juxtaposition* the main building block in the representation of narrative simultaneity. As we know, language is essentially sequential —the 'ineluctable' syntagmatic mode of articulated language— thereby impeded to account for simultaneity, a privilege that only music has. In music, many voices singing simultaneously generate harmony; in language, they generate cacophony. The only possibility for language to achieve simultaneity is *semantic*, especially in such rhetorical figures as metaphor, for in one and the same statement various meanings may be activated simultaneously. But, in general, language is bound to its syntagmatic prison: one after the other, *ineluctably*. Yet, if the *semantic* break from the prison of sequential language is metaphor, the *narrative* strategy to break free from these limitations is *juxtaposition*. Flaubert had been the master of juxtaposition signifying simultaneity; Joyce carries this technique beyond into perfection, and that he does in "Wandering Rocks": given one event evolving in a restricted period of time, or, simply, one given period of time, to represent various characters acting/thinking at the same time in different locations, juxtaposing their thoughts/acts as though they were in the same place at the same time, all this gives the illusion of simultaneity in different places.

Joyce called this narrative technique, via Stuart Gilbert, the *labyrinth*,[4] and indeed, he exploits the deceptions caused by our habit of identifying what is sequential as next in time, just as Stephen does in the "Proteus" episode —"[a] very short space of time through very short times of space. Five, six: the *nacheinander*"[5]. Because of this tendency to identify the sequential as *continuous* in time and the juxtaposed as *contiguous* in space, we, readers, literally get lost in all these mind-blowing space-time montages. "The episode —as Don Gifford reminds us— is composed of nineteen sections, which are interrupted by interpolated actions that

[4] Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's* Ulysses. *A Study*, p. 209.

[5] James Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 42.

are temporally simultaneous but spatially remote from the central action in which the interpolation occurs."[6] It is precisely the interpolations that disconcert us, that literally displace, almost *unhinge* us, forcing our mind to understand the successive as temporally simultaneous but in different places, thus producing the effect of the labyrinth. The rational opposition *nacheinander/nebeneinander* literally explodes into the erratic fragments of 'wandering rocks'.

To make matters more complicated, in the end, we only come out of this narrative labyrinth into a labyrinth of sound. Already, and as early as section 15 of the "Wandering Rocks", the barmaids at the Ormond hotel appear as an interpolation, and then, in the last section, there is a sort of *reprise* of all the characters' activities, frozen in a given moment of time as the vice regal cavalcade proceeds towards the southeast of Dublin: every one salutes them —seen or unseen— every one records this fleeting moment, including two barmaids saluting from behind the blinds of the Ormond Hotel bar, which prepares us for that leap into the labyrinth of sound of the next episode.

> Above the crossblind of the Ormond hotel, gold by bronze, Miss Kennedy's head by Miss Douce's head watched and admired. On Ormond quay Mr Simon Dedalus, steering his way from the greenhouse for the subsheriff's office, stood still in midstreet and brought his hat low. His Excellency graciously returned Mr Dedalus' greeting.[7]

Thus, we leave the labyrinth of the "Wandering Rocks" only to step into the labyrinth of sound of the first two pages of "Sirens". These first two pages constitute one of the many ways in which music is represented in this chapter.

Now, the conventional modes for representing music in verbal language —and specifically *narrative language*— are usually of the descriptive kind: the descriptive piece may offer an equivalent of the piece of music described, be it in the rhythm or in the sonority of language itself, or else the description may be focused on the effect of music on the mind and sensibility of the character. If music is intertwined with words, as in song, the lyrics alone suffice to evoke the music. This is what happens in the alternation between the words from von Flotow's aria "M'appari" and Bloom's response to Simon Dedalus' singing. Another mode of representation of music in literature is giving the text a musical structure —T.S. Eliot's

[6] Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman, Ulysses *Annotated. Notes for James Joyce's* Ulysses, p. 260.
[7] J. Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

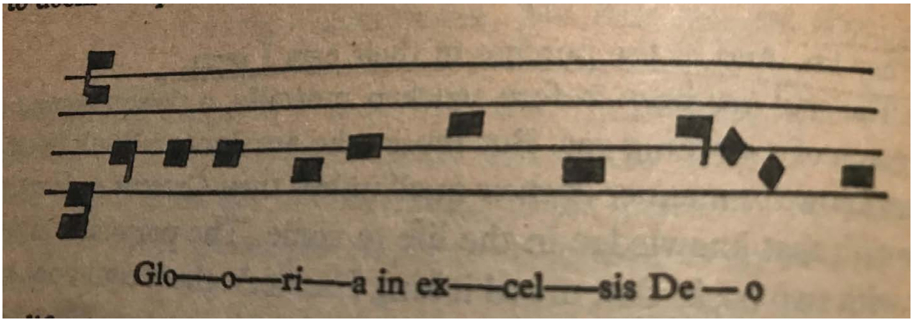


Figure 2. Extract from the "Scylla and Charybdis" section (J. Joyce, Ulysses, p. 198).

Four Quartets is a case in point, Alejo Carpentier's *Concierto barroco* is another. Joyce resorts to all forms and innovates in most. He plays with all modes of representation including the score, which he playfully dates, giving it a Gregorian look, in "Scylla and Charybdis" (figure 2):

He even resorts to the driest form, technical description, which curiously depletes music of its emotional content. Bloom's depressed musings on 'musemathematics' are illustrative:

> Numbers it is. All music when you come to think. Two multiplied by two divided by half is twice one. Vibrations: chords those are. One plus two plus six is seven. Do anything you like with figures juggling. Always find out this equal to that. Symmetry under a cemetery wall. He doesn't see my mourning. Callous: all for his own gut. Musemathematics. And you think you're listening to the ethereal. But suppose you said it like: "Martha, seven times nine minus x is thirtyfive thousand. Fall quite flat. It's on account of the sounds it is.[8]

But what Joyce does in "Sirens" is dazzling; he makes use of the structure of the fugue in so many innovative ways that it would be illuminating to analyze a few: 1) the first two pages —the "overture", as we may call it— constitute a mini fugue, 2) in the main body of the episode, with the structure of the fugue projected on to the urban space, Joyce rewrites music in terms of *musical cartography*; 3) the fugue revisited in Simon Dedalus' rendition of the aria "M'appari" from von Flotow's opera *Martha*, 'fugued', so to speak in Bloom's musings and the narrator's gloss of his state of mind.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 277.

1. *The Overture as Mini Fugue*

Let us begin at the beginning and examine the overture of the "Sirens" episode, a perfectly incomprehensible sequence of sounds, and yet, in effect, those first two pages constitute a mini fugue as well as the synthesis of the whole episode.[9]

A EXPOSITION

1. Bronze by gold heard the hoof-irons, steelyringing.
2. Imperthnthn thnthnthn.
3. Chips, picking chips off rocky thumbnail, chips.
4. Horrid! And gold flushed more.
5. A husky fifenote blew.
6. Blew. Blue bloom is on the.
7. Goldpinnacled hair.
8. A jumping rose on satiny breast of satin, rose of Castille.
9. Trilling, trilling: Idolores.
10. Peep! Who's in the… peepofgold?
11. Tink cried to bronze in pity.
12. And a call, pure, long and throbbing. Longindying call.
13. Decoy. Soft word. But look: the bright stars fade. Notes chirruping answer.
14. O rose! Castille. The morn is breaking.
15. Jingle jingle jaunted jingling.
16. Coin rang. Clock clacked.
17. Avowal. Sonnez. I could. Rebound of garter. Not leave thee. Smack. La cloche! Thigh smack. Avowal. Warm. Sweetheart, goodbye!
18. Jingle. Bloo.

B DEVELOPMENT

19. Boomed crashing chords. When love absorbs. War! War! The tympanum.
20. A sail. A veil awave upon the waves.
21. Lost. Throstle fluted. All is lost now.
22. Horn. Hawhorn
23. When first he saw. Alas!
24. Full tup. Full throb.
25. Warbling. Ah, lure! Alluring.
26. Martha! Come!
27. Clapclap. Clipclap. Clappyclap.
28. Goodgod heneverheard inall.
29. Deaf bald Pat brought pad knife took up.
30. A moonlit nightcall: far, far.
31. I feel so sad. P. S. So lonely blooming.
32. Listen!
33. The spiked and winding cold seahorn. Have you the? Each, and for other, plash and silent roar.
34. Pearls: when she. Liszt's rhapsodies. Hissss.
35. You don't?
36. Did not: no, no: believe: Lidlyd. With a cock with a carra.
37. Black. Deepsounding. Do, Ben, do.
38. Wait while you wait. Hee hee. Wait while you hee.
39. But wait!
40. Low in dark middle earth. Embedded ore.
41. *Naminedamine*. Preacher is he.
42. All gone. All fallen.
43. Tiny, her tremulous fernfoils of maidenhair.
44. Amen! He gnashed in fury.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 254-256.

A_1 REEXPOSITION

45. Fro. To, fro. A baton cool protruding.
46. Bronzelydia by Minagold.
47. By bronze, by gold, in ocean-green of shadow. Bloom. Old Bloom.
48. One rapped, one tapped, with a carra, with a cock.
49. Pray for him! Pray, good people!
50. His gouty fingers nakkering.
51. Big Benaben. Big Benben.
52. Last rose Castille of summer left bloom I feel so sad alone.
53. Pwee! Little wind piped wee.
54. True men. Lid Ker Cow De and Doll. Ay, ay. Like you men. Will lift your tschink with tschunk.
55. Fff! Oo!
56. Where bronze from anear? Where gold from afar? Where hoofs?
57. Rrrpr. Kraa. Kraandl.
58. Then not till then. My eppripfftaph. Be pfrwritt.
59. Done.
60. Begin!

The overture is made up of some 60 motifs that are meaningless, and yet, pure sound poetry. The unintelligibility of these motifs, however, is not due to the words themselves; the words as such *do* have meaning but, set in syntactic chains without any rational sequence, devoid of context —specifically narrative context— they become meaningless sounds. Thus, in the absence of meaning —understood in this manner— the reader is forced to turn to the pure *sonority* of the language that orchestrates this musical-narrative overture. As the reader's reason is barred from understanding, (s)he has to turn to the sonority of language to make sense of these two pages. Then a meaningful pattern emerges; for example, the constant opposition between back and front vowels, "[b]lew. Blue bloom is on the" (6) / "[j]ingle jingle jaunted jingling" (15); between liquid-sibilant sounds, "[p]earls: when she. Liszt's rhapsodies. Hissss" (34); and harsh fricatives, "[h]orn. Hawhorn" (22). These are just token sounds that clearly make up a pattern of oppositions and contrasts. At some point during the overture they fuse —or condense— into one motive: "[j]ingle. Bloo" (18) or "silent roar" (33).[10] The very first statement of the theme embraces all these sound oppositions: "[b]ronze by gold heard the *hoofirons*, *steelyringing*" (1). As we peruse these sound patterns we realize that they might be understood as one of the many modes of transposition between language and music; that this overture is in fact a mini fugue.

Now, the fugue is a polyphonic musical structure based on the *repetition* of a melodic line or subject; a compositional procedure characterized by the

[10] The numbers between parentheses refer to the motifs, as I have numbered them, from 1 to 60. In other editions there are only 59, in mine and many others I have seen, they are 60.

systematic imitation of a principal theme, called *subject*, in simultaneously sounding melodic lines or voices, who *answer* the subject in counterpoint (that is, if the subject is in the tonal key, the answer is in the dominant or subdominant keys); [11] furthermore, the repetition is not only in counterpoint but out of phase, displaced in time, as it were. The fugue has a tripartite structure: *exposition*, *development* and *re-exposition*.

A fugue begins with the *exposition* of its subject in one of the voices in the tonic key. After the statement of the subject, a second voice enters and states the subject with the subject transposed to another key, usually the dominant or subdominant, which is known as the *answer*. This pattern may be repeated with all the other voices, usually three or four.

In the second section, the *development*, further entries of the subject, or middle entries, occur throughout the fugue. They must state the subject or answer at least once in its entirety, and may also be heard in combination with the countersubject(s) from the exposition, new countersubjects, free counterpoint, or any of these in combination. In this middle section, more episodes are introduced which greatly modulate the material presented in the exposition. Likewise, in this middle section the use of pauses and/or long duration silences is very frequent: this with the intent of stressing and highlighting the main theme when it appears again.

Finally, the third section, the *re-exposition* is not simply an exact repetition of the exposition. The closing section of a fugue often includes one or two counter-expositions, as well as material used in the development. Any material that follows the final entry of the subject is considered to be the final coda and is normally cadential.[12]

Once we have an idea, even if rather a vague one, of the structure of the fugue, we realize what Joyce is doing and what his transposing strategies are. In the first seven motifs, for example, we clearly hear a change of tone, equivalent to the 'statement' of the subject and the counterpoint 'answer' in different keys:

1. Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing.
2. Imperthnthn thnthnthn.
3. Chips, picking chips off rocky thumbnail, chips.
4. Horrid! And gold flushed more.
5. A husky fifenote blew.

[11] The repetition is not exact, as it would be in the *canon* —an older musical form that antecedes and prepares for the fugue, on the paradigm of *Frère Jaques, frère Jaques*…
[12] *Vid.* Mark DeVoto, "Fugue", and José Rodríguez Alvira, "Formas: La fuga".

6. Blew. Blue bloom is on the.
7. Goldpinnacled hair.

The re-exposition of this mini fugue (motifs 45 to 60) takes up the statement of the subject in motif one, but modulates it considerably, for we have a fusion of the barmaids' motifs with the Bloom motifs. Hence, motifs 45-47 take us back to the main subject in the exposition, but with Bloom's 'voice' incorporated:

45. Fro. To, fro. A baton cool protruding.
46. Bronzelydia by Minagold.
47. *By bronze, by gold, in oceangreen of shadow. Bloom. Old Bloom.*

The overture ends on the paradoxical note of the two last motifs: *Done. Begin* (59-60). And, indeed, one representation of the fugue is *done*, the other is about to *begin*.

2. Musical Cartography: The Fugue Projected on to the Urban Space

When the episode really begins, we notice how each and every motif is gradually filled with narrative context and, therefore, meaning: "Bronze by gold" (1), for example, are the two barmaids at the Ormond hotel flirting with anyone that comes their way; the enigmatic "[c]hips picking chips" of the third motif is only Simon Dedalus coming into the bar, picking at his nails: "Into their bar strolled Mr. Dedalus. Chips, picking chips off one of his rocky thumbnails. Chips. He strolled"[13]. "Blew. Blue bloom is on the" (6) clearly refers to Leopold Bloom, and "[j]ingle jingle jaunted jingling" (15), in context, represents Blazes Boylan, both "voices" clearly opposed in sound patterns: back (dark) vowels for Bloom; front (light) vowels for Boylan.

We soon realize that the temptresses, singing the main theme of the episode —*seduction*— are the two barmaids whose statement of the subject is, precisely, "[b]ronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing" (1), which is then restated in considerably longer duration as "[y]es, bronze from anear, by gold from afar, heard steel from anear, hoofs ring from afar,

[13] James Joyce, *op cit.*, p. 259.

and heard steelhoofs ringhoof ringsteel",[14] and this only in response —or restatement— to the second voice, Bloom:

> —It's them has the fine times, sadly then she said.
> A man.
> Bloowho went by by Moulang's pipes bearing in his breast the sweets of sin, by Wine's antiques, in memory bearing sweet sinful words, by Carroll's dusky battered plate, for Raoul".[15]

Both male and female voices sing the melody of seduction, the main subject of the episode. The leading voice introduces the subject. This leading voice is the dual female voice represented by the barmaids —who, of course stand for the Homeric proverbial Sirens— while the answer in counterpoint is Bloom. This goes on for some time, making it clear that the subject and answer in counterpoint are in these two voices, with certain hinge points that would be the equivalent to the counterpoint. Two hinge points are worth highlighting: the "*eye*", variously modulated as "*his goggle eye*" (258), "*your other eye*" (258), "*dark eye*" (258), "*greasy eye*", and *marriage*, variously modulated as "*married to the greasy nose*" (259), and **"***married to Bloom, to greaseabloom*" (259). All these motifs, stated by the barmaids are then taken up by Bloom's voice answering the subject of this curious fugue. Let us look at the passage more closely:

> —O! shrieking, miss Kennedy cried. Will you ever forget his *goggle eye*?
> Miss Douce chimed in in deep bronze laughter, shouting:
> —And *your other eye*!
> Bloowhose *dark eye* read Aaron Figatner's name (…) By Bassi's blessed virgins Bloom's *dark eyes* went by (…) By went *his eyes*. The sweets of sin. Sweet are the sweets.
> Of sin.
> In a giggling peal young goldbronze voices blended, Miss Kennedy lipped her cup again, raised, drank a sip and gigglegiggled. Douce with Kennedy *your other eye*. (…):
> —O *greasy eyes*! Imagine being *married* to a man like that! she cried. With his bit of beard! Douce gave full vent to a splendid yell, a full yell of full woman, delight, joy, indignation.
> —*Married to the greasy nose*! she yelled.
> Shrill, with deep laughter, after, gold after bronze, they urged each each to peal after peal, ringing in changes, bronzegold, goldbronze, shrilldeep, to

[14] *Ibid*. p. 257.
[15] *Ibid*. p. 256.

laughter after laughter. And then laughed more. *Greasy I knows*. Exhausted, breathless, their shaken heads they laid, braided and pinnacled by glossycombed, against the counterledge. All flushed (O!), panting, sweating (O!), all breathless.

Married to Bloom, to greaseabloom (…)

—O saints above! miss Douce said, sighed above her jumping rose. I wished I hadn't laughed so much. I feel all wet.

—O, miss Douce! miss Kennedy protested. You horrid thing!

And flushed yet more (you horrid!), more goldenly.

By Cantwell's offices roved *Greaseabloom* (…)[16]

Because of the intricate net of echoes in the stating and responding motifs of *eyes*, *grease*, and *married to the greasy eye*, alongside all the sexual innuendoes around these motifs, on a first reading one might be led to think that the barmaids are talking *about* Bloom and his marriage. But, no, the barmaids, as veritable sirens, just flirt and tempt any man that comes their way. If initially they might be talking about some man in the vice regal cavalcade, soon it becomes evident that they are talking about some other man, any man. But in the network of musical transpositions all these motifs are echoed in the Bloom voice. They are *not*, however, talking about Bloom (to begin with, Bloom does not have a "bit of beard"); Bloom is not even near the bar at the Ormond Hotel, but walking in its vicinity. Yet the two voices are tinged with lustful thoughts in counterpoint: "your other eye" (and all its sexual connotations) becomes Bloom's "dark eye"; whoever is "married to the greasy nose" becomes *"married to Bloom, to greaseabloom*", and, in the end, Leopold Bloom is simply transformed into an echo of the subject: "*Greaseabloom*".

A few remarks are called for at this point. One is that Bloom is clearly the second 'voice' in the main fugue of the episode,[17] both stating the subject of seduction and answering the sirens' sexual innuendos. The second remark to be made is that Bloom's 'voice' is taken up and elaborated by the *narrator's voice*; strictly speaking, the 'voice' that states the theme is not Bloom himself in interior monologue, but the narrator making this musical connection between the sirens' singing-chattering and Bloom's activities and state of mind. Another remark to be made is that if Bloom is the second voice stating the subject of the fugue, this voice is 'displaced' in time and space. Although the text is continuous, suggesting not only temporal continuity but spatial contiguity, the spatial montages that we

[16] *Ibid.* pp. 258-259.

[17] This being the second fugue; the first being the mini fugue of the overture.

appreciated in the "Wandering Rocks" episode are at work here again. Due to what I would call *musical cartography*, the second voice initiates its statement of the subject on a different spatial plane, thus *projecting the fugue on to the urban space*. The same is true of Blazes Boylan, who plays his part, not in the bar but in the urban displacements: *towards* the Ormond bar, at the beginning (his trajectory from Trinity College carried over from the "Wandering Rocks" episode), and *from* the bar to 7 Eccles Street, towards the end of the episode (figure 3). In both cases, the 'voice' is taken over by the narrator describing his course on the map and the tonal variations of his contrapuntal responses to the theme of seduction.

Given this interesting projection of the structure of the fugue on to the urban space, with each voice stating the subject not only on a parallel melodic line, but on a different urban space, it might be illuminating to see some forms of spatial and kinetic projection of an actual fugue. There are various versions, offered by YouTube, of Bach's "Little" Fugue in G minor BWV 578. Unfortunately, some last longer; others disappear or are registered as no longer available. But in many, what strikes us is the visual spatial/kinetic projection of the fugue. As the video traces the different 'voices' of the fugue as parallel lines moving on different spatial planes, we may envision what Joyce is doing with music transposed to narrative language: he is projecting each 'voice' moving simultaneously on different urban paths, yet appearing in the narrative as strictly sequential, in terms of time, and contiguous, in terms of space. But, as each voice evolves in the statement of the theme, they visually converge in parallel lines offering patterns that stand for counterpoint. Here is a simple visual projection in one of the videos still available in YouTube (figure 4):

Thus, one of the wonderful discoveries in this visual projection of a Bach fugue is that each voice is represented on a different line, therefore on a different *space*, even though what we hear is simultaneous. It is precisely this spatial-kinetic montage that may be understood as the representation of the simultaneous, and this is what Joyce is doing narratively. Furthermore, what we could call the *hinge points* in the parallel melodic lines are the equivalent to the harmonic relationship between the tonic and the dominant and subdominant keys, in the contrapuntal statement and/or answer to the subject. The tonic key notes and their correlates in the dominant key appear almost as on a mirror, just as the modulations occurring in the *eye* and the *married-to-a-greasy-nose* motifs mirror each other in the barmaids' and Bloom's 'voices'.

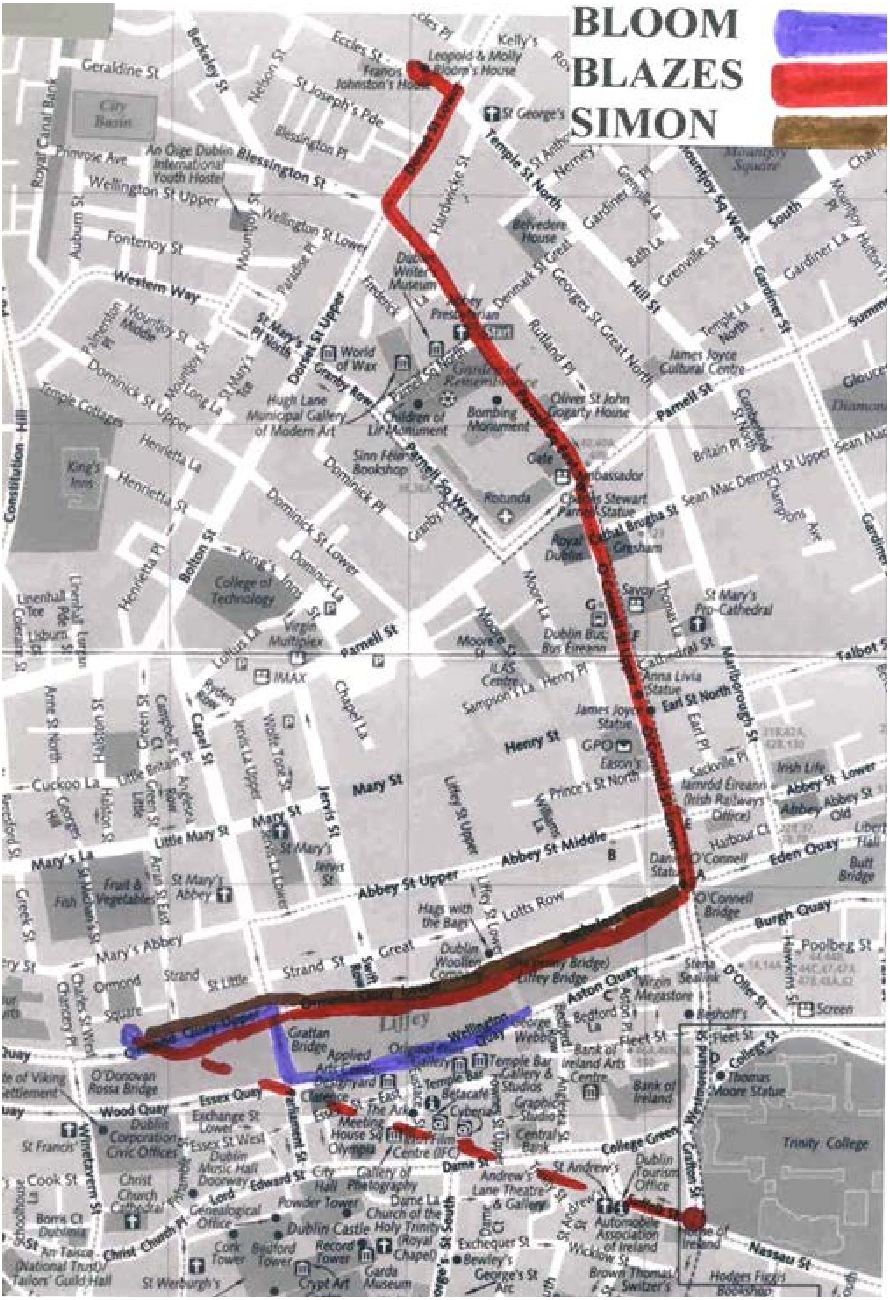


*Figure 3. Urban perambulations in the "Sirens" episode, some taken over from "Wandering Rocks": Bloom's (in purple), Blazes Boylan (in red), and Simon Dedalus' (in brown). Representation also created by Pimentel (*vid. *caption to figure 1).*

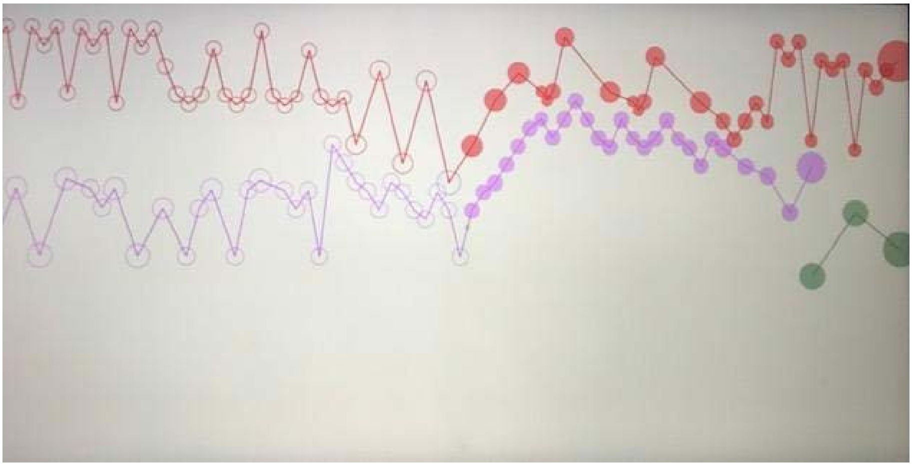


*Figure 4. Screenshot taken by Pimentel of a spatial projection of one segment of Bach's "Little" Fugue in G minor BWV 578 (*vid*. Performance Emulation, "Bach, 'Little' Fugue in G Minor BWV 578 'free mp3'", 0:34).*

Following the suggestion that this episode is structured as a fugue —*Fuga per canonem*, as Joyce calls it—[18] we could propose some equivalents that make this transposition possible. In the first place, as we have already described them, there are a series of sound oppositions and contrasts: dark and light sounds that are embodied in the opposition between frontal and back vowels; liquid and soft sibilants in contrast with harsh fricative sounds, etc. These oppositions and contrasts then manifest themselves in the narrative: the opposition between feminine and masculine; between presence and absence; between sound and silence; between hearing and seeing, and, especially in the characters, these strong oppositions are represented by the rival lovers of Molly Bloom: Leopold Bloom and Blazes Boylan, who fuse in motif number 18, "Jingle. Bloo" —a fusion that marks the end of the fugue's exposition in the overture. Considering all these oppositions and contrasts, we might suggest that this narrative fugue is made up of four main voices: the barmaids, Leopold Bloom, Blazes Boylan, and Simon Dedalus. These four voices, in turn, are modulated by all the oppositions we have listed. The feminine voices are represented, mainly, by the barmaids who are present, but also by two other feminine voices who are absent, yet incorporated in Leopold Bloom's imagination:

[18] S. Gilbert, *op. cit*., p. 222.

Molly Bloom and Martha Clifford; they are also sirens of sorts. Finally, Simon Dedalus represents the *collective* male voice of the tempters and the tempted: Ben Dollard, Lenehan, Lydwell, and company.

3. The Fugue Revisited: Simon Dedalus' Rendition of the "M'appari" Aria

If Simon Dedalus represents the collective male voice of the tempters and the tempted, that collective voice then steps down to the dual. While he sings the aria, "M'appari", from von Flotow's opera *Martha*, Simon Dedalus himself doubles up as the forlorn lover, Lionel who, in the end, is fused with the other forlorn lover back there in the restaurant: Bloom. Thus, Bloom is condensed into *Siopold.* Blazes Boylan plays an interesting part in this fugue, for his voice is 'tempting' to the barmaids only at the beginning, yet he is mainly absent from this episode; present, however, in Bloom's fretful thoughts, as Simon sings. Ironically, the full scene of the Boylan-Molly sexual encounter is played out only in Bloom's imagination. And that happens at the *climax* of this episode, the "M'appari" aria, which is in itself structured as a fugue in four voices, two present —Simon-Lionel and Bloom— two absent —Molly and Blazes— yet present in Bloom's imagination. We could speak of the fragments of the aria alternating with Bloom's musings as another mini fugue inserted in the main one that structures the whole episode. Indeed, the fugue revisited in a different mode.

A few considerations at this point. All the contrasts and oppositions of which I have spoken are at work here in order to have subject and countersubject play against each other. Let us look closer at the aria. [19]

> *When first I saw that form endearing,*
> *Sorrow from me seem'd to depart:*
> Each graceful look, each word so cheering,
> Charm'd my eye and won my heart.
>
> *Full of hope, and all delighted,*
> None could feel more blest than I;
> All on earth I then could wish for,
> Was near her to live and die:

[19] There are many versions of this famous aria, notably in Italian! For an English version, *vid.* Friedrich von Flotow, "M'Appari", in *Music from the Works of James Joyce* [online].

But alas! 'twas idle dreaming,
And the dream too soon hath flown;
Not one *ray of hope* is gleaming;
I am lost, yes I am lost, for she is gone.

When first I saw that form endearing,
Sorrow from me seem'd to depart:
Each graceful look, each word so cheering,
Charm'd my eye and won my heart.

Martha, Martha, I am sighing,
I am weeping still for thee;
Come thou lost one, come though dear one,
Thou alone can'st comfort me:

Ah! Martha return! Come to me.[20]

In Joyce's text, we realize that, despite the assumed simultaneity, only fragments of the aria appear in this climactic scene. The lyrics are in italics, followed by Bloom's silent musings, whether in his own voice as interior monologue or glossed by the narrator's voice. So that we could say that the aria is both, sung *simultaneously* alongside Bloom's train of thought, and, at the same time, *refracted* in Bloom's mind. The fragments of the aria would represent the statement of the subject and Bloom's musings would come as the counterpoint answer, modulated in tone and time. Let us look at an example. The first two verses of the aria are given in strict succession giving rise to a contrapuntal answer that lingers in time long after the statement by Lionel-Simon has been made.

—*When first I saw that form endearing ...*
Richie turned.
—Si Dedalus' voice, he said.
—Braintipped, cheek touched with flame, they listened feeling that *flow endearing flow over skin limbs human heart soul spine*. Bloom signed to Pat, bald Pat is a waiter hard of hearing, to set ajar the door of the bar. The door of the bar. So. That will do. Pat, waiter, waited, waiting to hear, for he was hard of hear by the door.

[20] Friedrich von Flotow, "'M'appari'; or Martha, Martha, O Return Love", in *Bronze by Gold Heard… Music in the Works of James Joyce* [online]. Translated by Charles Jeffereys.
The fragments in italics or underlined characters (done by myself; the underlining is present when in the original text is in italics) are those that actually appear in Joyce's text. The fragmentary nature of the lyrics, as represented in Joyce's narrative, point to Bloom's selective attention, on the one hand; on the other, they constitute the statement of the subject to which Bloom's state of mind responds in counterpoint.

—*... Sorrow from me seemed to depart.*

Through the hush of air a voice sang to them, low, not rain, not leaves in murmur, like no voice of strings or reeds or whatdoyoucallthem dulcimers touching their still ears with words, still hearts of their each his remembered lives. Good, good to hear: *sorrow from them each seemed to from both depart when first they heard. When first they saw*, lost Richie Poldy, mercy of beauty, heard from a person wouldn't expect it in the least, her first merciful lovesoft oftloved word.[21]

Considering that we are in the middle section of the fugue-episode, the presence of Pat the deaf waiter is significant. As we have observed, in this middle section the use of pauses and/or long duration silences is very frequent; this with the intent of stressing and highlighting the main theme when it appears again. This is the role of silence and pause played by Pat, the deaf waiter, before we come to the climactic point in the aria.

Throughout the aria we have the constant alternations —subject and countersubject, as it were— between Simon singing and the impact his song makes on Bloom's mind:

—*Full of hope and all delighted...*

Tenors get women by the score. Increase their flow. Throw flower at his feet. When will we meet? My head it simply. *Jingle* [15, 18] *all delighted.* He can't sing for tall hats. Your head it simply swurls. Perfumed for him. What perfume does your wife? I want to know. *Jing* [15]. Stop. Knock. Last look at mirror always before she answers the door. The hall. There? How do you? I do well. There? What? Or? Phial of cachous, kissing comfits, in her satchel. Yes? Hands felt for the opulent.[22]

But, as I have observed, sometimes the impact is made evident in the gloss that the narrator makes of Bloom's state of mind. The most impressive and truly climatic is the descriptive and narrative equivalent of the High C chestnote interval between "*Come*" (and this should be read in as many musical, semantic and narrative lines as possible) and "*To me!*"[23] This is a veritable *tour de force* of the musical and the erotic rendition of the aria's climax:[24]

—*Martha! Ah, Martha!* [26]

[21] James Joyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 272-273.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 273. The numbers in brackets refer to the motif number in the overture, thus suggesting how the meaningless motifs of the overture are filled in with narrative context.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 274, p. 275.

[24] All underlining is my own in the following passage.

> Quitting all languor Lionel cried in grief, in cry of passion dominant to love to return with deepening yet with rising chords of harmony. In cry of lionel loneliness that she should know, must Martha feel. For only her he waited. Where? Here there try there here all try where. Somewhere.
> —*Co-ome, thou lost one!* [21]
> *Co-ome, thou dear one!*
> Alone. One love. One hope. One comfort me. Martha, chestnote,
> Return!
> —*Come ...!* [26]
> It soared, a bird, it held its flight, a swift pure cry, soar silver orb it leaped serene, speeding, sustained, to come, don't spin it out too long long breath he breath long life, soaring high, high resplendent, aflame, crowned, high in the effulgence symbolistic, high, of the ethereal bosom, high, of the high vast irradiation everywhere all soaring all around about the all, the endlessnessnessness…
> —*To me!*
> Siopold!
> Consumed [*cf. Done* (59)].[25]

This is pure poetry: the verbal rendition of a prolonged High C chest-note, composed in terms of elevation, "soaring high, high resplendent, aflame" to be consumed in the lingering mood of "endlessnessnessness…"[26] Perfect simultaneity on various planes: song and imagination, presence and absence; the climax of music, of narrative, and the *other* climax at 7 Eccles Street, all converging in this passage. This is the fatal hour, past four o'clock already; it must have happened, it must be happening now, the act must have been consummated while Simon Dedalus sang the aria. Yes, "[c]onsumed".[27]

Ah!, but the overall fugue —that is, the one that structures the episode as a whole— is not over yet, we're in the middle of the middle section, the re-exposition is still to come… and suddenly, we realize that Blazes Boylan has not *come* yet. He is in Dorset Street, not too far (figure 3), but not quite there. And we are still far from the end of the episode…

The marvelous, almost miraculous, conjunction of music, language, and imagination has made this poetic consummation possible. This is Bloom's triumph: against all odds, he has *come* before Boylan! Indeed, Bloom has soared "high, high resplendent, aflame, crowned, high in the effulgence symbolistic, high, of the ethereal bosom, high, of the high vast

[25] J. Joyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 272-275.
[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 274-275.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 275.

irradiation everywhere all soaring all around about the all, the endlessnessnessness…"[28]

The rest is just the *debris* of the coda.

> Let my epitaph be. Kraaaaaa. Written. I have.
> Pprrpffrrppffff.
> Done.[29]

Yes, and I also have *done*.

[28] *Idem*.
[29] *Ibid*., p. 290.

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VARIATIONS ON A JOYCEAN THEME: JOHN CAGE'S READINGS, RE-WRITINGS, MORE RE-READINGS, AND VISITATIONS OF *FINNEGANS WAKE*

@

SUSANA GONZÁLEZ AKTORIES

Words? Music? No: it's what's behind.
James Joyce, *Ulysses*

Joyce's interest in music is well known: he was keen on piano-playing and singing, as well as on music history and theory. Musical interests are also noticeable in Joyce's writing, as is clear from his countless references to music. In both his prose and his verse, the presence of traditional Irish music and popular songs, and those forms known to us as "classical" and which derive from orchestral music, is quite noticeable.[1] Vast as they are, these references serve various purposes in Joyce's writings —when incorporating titles or verses from certain vocal pieces, for example, they point to specific compositions by means of direct quotations. They also may include explicit mentions of composers or performers, as well as instances or elements relating to musical performativity such as instruments, contexts, music halls, or even structural or conceptual allusions to music. A

[1] Only in *Finnegans Wake*, allusions to music, including the novel's title itself, can be counted in the thousands, starting by its title: 'Finnegans Wake' which refers to a well-known Irish folk song ("Song and Music in the Works of James Joyce", par. 5).

good example of this is the widely discussed musical form of the fugue, which Joyce used as inspiration to pen chapter 11 of *Ulysses*, from which the epigraph for the present article has been borrowed.

Equally fascinating is the inverse process; that is, the one that Joycean texts undergo in order to find their way into the realm of music, in diverse genres and styles, and from the most varied climes. Within the broad spectrum of pieces that have been inspired by Joyce's oeuvre there are many which have been written on the basis of compositional forms developed during the twentieth century. Among them can be found twelve-note compositions, electro-acoustic music, as well as concrete, minimalist, and spectral pieces. In a more popular context, Joyce's influence can be traced in indie, punk, rock, and noise music, to mention a few genres. As can be gleaned from a recent study, the Joycean corpus in music consists of nearly 330 references,[2] which confirms the vitality of Joycean revisitations in this particular artistic field. Clearly, there is an urgent need to elaborate on the nature of these compositions as an alternative way to study the different types of musical performances and receptions of Joyce's legacy.

Among the most salient Joyce-inspired pieces in music, the compositions of Italy's Luciano Berio, a stalwart pioneer of electro-acoustic music, are an unavoidable reference. In 1953, Berio reworked a number of Joyce's poems from *Chamber Music*. These musical re-elaborations were intended for the American soprano Cathy Berberian, who was skilled in extended vocal techniques. Also, the 1961 piece *Epifanie* stands out for its vocal experimentation, which largely relies upon the literary discourses of Edoardo Sanguineti, Marcel Proust, Bertolt Brecht, and James Joyce among other authors. Particularly from the latter one, Berio takes for this piece fragments originally found in *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. However, his best known Joycean proposal is *Omaggio a Joyce* (1958),[3] conceived as an electro-acoustic radio broadcast, where the aforementioned 'fugued' version of chapter 11 in *Ulysses* ("Sirens") is ingeniously re-interpreted. Apparently, *Omaggio* was never broadcast on radio. In Berio's work, the literary fugue is repositioned in a sonorous context, unlike the tonal system in which the genre originally flourished, by replacing it in *Omaggio* as a full electro-acoustic musical structure. *Omag-*

[2] *Cf.* Derek Pyle, Krzytof Bartnicki, and Tess Brewer (compilers), "History of James Joyce Music — Adaptations, Interpretations and Inspirations. A Bibliographical Chronology of Musical Works Inspired by Joyce": still considered a work in progress, the project is continually updated and includes compositions developed even in as recently as 2019.

[3] The radio broadcast was originally intended as a quadraphonic sound piece. It was later edited in stereo in two different versions: *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* (1958), and *Omaggio a Joyce* (1959).

gio a Joyce is thus a fully-fledged 'verbal fugue,' which, in turn, is based upon a series of recordings of Berberian reading different passages from "Sirens". The passages are then segmented, deconstructed, and manipulated in a new edition of the recording.

Even if this article revolves around the figure of John Cage —who also found in Joyce fertile ground for experimentation— we have been referring to Berio because it is through him that we can begin to explain, by means of a few curious coincidences, some of the characteristics that make the American composer stand out with regard to his treatment of Joyce.

As a young man of 30, Cage wrote by commission a piece for voice and piano entitled *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs* (1942). His inspiration in this case originated in a descriptive lyrical passage from the closing sections of *Finnegans Wake*,[4] and the writing of the piece predates Berio's exercises on Joyce by more than a decade. This piece, as presented in its 1950 version, features a voice moving in a three-toned interval, with a technique akin to *Sprechstimme*,[5] while the piano remains closed, demanding a performance that is essentially beaten on its cover. Due to its vocal characteristics, this work may resemble a composition by Berio that is based upon Joyce's poem "Monotone", and which was written also to be performed by Berberian. Even though Cage did not have the American soprano in mind when he wrote this work, it is no coincidence that, years later, and due to their fondness of *The Wonderful Widow…*, Berio and Berberian should have included it in their repertoire to be performed on a number of occasions.[6]

Cage's early interest in Joyce's work grew over the years. According to the composer, he purchased his first copy of *Finnegans Wake* in 1939 as a 'must' —it was something one needed to own, even if he confesses to not having even opened it until he was commissioned *The Wonderful Widow…*.[7] But even then Cage's first reading of it was fragmentary, and he would complete his journey through the novel later on in his life. For instance, during the 1960s, when he felt compelled to revisit *Finnegans*

[4] The piece was commissioned for Janet Fairbank, a wealthy soprano of rather limited talent. Dealing with the passage in question, Cage refers to page 556 of his Viking Press edition of *Finnegans Wake* (*vid.* J. Cage, *Writing for the Second Time through* Finnegans Wake, as well as Lauriejean Reinhardt, "John Cage's 'The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs'").

[5] This refers to a singing technique resembling recitation that focuses on the sonorous qualities of the spoken word. It was first used and developed in the early twentieth century by composers like Arnold Schoenberg.

[6] Berio and Berberian performed Cage's piece in different moments. *Vid.* J. Cage, "John Cage: *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs* (1942)" for one of these performances. Even though the pianist remains uncredited in the recording, it may be assumed that it is Berio himself.

[7] *Vid.* J. Cage, *Writing for the Second Time through* Finnegans Wake.

Wake after Marshall McLuhan prompted him to imagine a series of sonic resources based on the novel.[8] Unfortunately, the Cage-McLuhan project never saw the light of day. In the 1970s, Cage once again found an inspiration to meticulously read Joyce's book from cover to cover. This time, the force behind his decision was Elliot Anderson, editor of the *Tri-Quarterly* journal. Anderson asked Cage to contribute a piece for a monograph edition on *Finnegans Wake* he was preparing. This new experience, according to Cage himself, left him "stuck in the *Wake*".[9] He became obsessed with the novel, and this resulted in a complex and detailed reading and re-elaboration of Joyce's work. His enterprise would last a number of years, which meant that his efforts would obviously escape the limits of Anderson's assignment.

In what follows we will focus on the unique, incomparable, re-readings and re-writings of *Finnegans Wake* that Cage conducted on many levels and in various senses.

Cage's Finnegans Wake*: An Active Yet Silent Reading*

John Cage was always an outstanding reader and an 'active' peruser who would appropriate the texts that he found most appealing. Firstly, he would take in such a text as a kind of silent act, according to a self-imposed, nearly Oulipian, principle. In his readings Cage would strive to find a new order for the words, which he would eventually rewrite. Understood as a result of a homage-reading, Cage's rewritings were highly poetical, rendered in a genre different to the one he departed from. The new words, reordered in verse, not only condensed or synthesised semantic nucleuses, but they also offered fresh, unexpectedly sonorous reconfigurations. Cage's process was determined, most of all, by a creative principle consisting of an encoding of each text's author in such a way that they could be read vertically. He called these creations 'mesostics' in order to distinguish them from acrostics.[10] Here the key letters to the reading would be placed at the centre rather than at the beginning of a line, or even in the middle of a word. This meant that several lines were placed vertically on the page,

[8] *Vid* J. Cage, *Writing through* Finnegans Wake.
[9] *Vid.* J. Cage, *Writing for the Second Time through* Finnegans Wake, and David Revill, *The Roaring Silence. John Cage. A Life*, ch. 14.
[10] *Vid.* Marjorie Perloff, "John Cage Conceptualist Poet".

and their key words would be emphasised by means of their size and type, either in capitals or boldface. Through this 'pillar', it would become evident that there was in each text a series of vocalic and consonantal intersections and interconnections, which, in turn, would reveal the identities of the authors to whom homage was being paid.

Cage's mesostic process entailed continued readings, recognitions, and compositional methods, which would then allow for sequenced recompositions of fragments from the different literary texts. Cage would then derivatively rearrange a set of words on each page, in such a way that the first names and surnames of those authors would become readable. An example of this is the following fragment from *Finnegans Wake*, which, incidentally, is Cage's most famous mesostic:

worth with twone nathand**J**oe
A
Malt
jh**E**m
Shen
pft**J**schute
s**O**lid man
that the humpt**Y**hillhead of humself
is at the kno**C**k out
in th**E** park[11]

It was during the 1970s that Cage devoted himself to experimenting with this technique. He started off with an essay by his friend, choreographer Merce Cunningham.[12] Then he would apply the technique to Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Marcel Duchamp's notes, Henry David Thoreau's diaries, and even biblical passages from the Book of Genesis. His experiments with *Finnegans Wake*, however, were unique in that it inspired the greatest number of mesostics, considering also that he developed them in several versions. Cage finished the first of them, entitled *Writing through* Finnegans Wake, in 1976, but it was too long for

[11] *Editor's note:* The manuscript of the piece, at the time of writing, was originally available in the the link for the reference provided for J. Cage, "First Mesostic of *Finnegans Wake*" (*vid.* "Works Cited" section at the end of this chapter); the website was curated by the Electronic Museum of Lingua-Acoustic Space. However, during the process of editing the text, the link ceased to function. The author has indicated that an image of the text referenced may be found in the link provided in the following entry in the "Works Cited": PoemTalk, "Hadbeen Variety (PoemTalk #135. John Cage, 'Writing for the Second Time through *Finnegans Wake*'".

[12] Marjorie Perloff specifies that Cage's first mesostic was written in prose and dedicated to Edward Densby. In her essay, Perloff elaborates on the value of syntax for Cage's mesostics (*vid*. Marjorie Perloff, "The Music of Verbal Space: John Cage's 'What You Say'").

publication, according to a number of testimonies.[13] The second version, developed in 1977-78, was finally published with the title of *Writing for the Second Time through* Finnegans Wake*,* which alludes to the existence of an ur-effort. Three more versions would subsequently follow.[14] Being the most popular one, the second variant will be the focus of this article.

Rather than reducing the piece's length by leaving out passages —as had been suggested to him— Cage decided that, in order to obtain a final cut for the second version, a new reading of *Finnegans Wake* would have to be conducted. The combinatory principle he used to deal with both consonants and vocals was more rigorous when Cage decided to embark on a second reading of the novel. Also, his alternative selection of passages was equally detailed, if significantly more compact, than the first one. This resulted in a completely new text that was barely forty pages long.

Cage's process was admirably meticulous —he read through the novel's considerable length with extreme care, and even backwards, as he once said. According to James Pritchett, the verbal constellations resulting from this exercise included "not just the words necessary to spell out the key, but also certain amount of their original context, the exact amount chosen according to his tastes, but within the restrictions of the mesostic form".[15]

The effort invested in Cage's new revision of *Finnegans Wake* makes us wonder whether this brief, derivative reading can be considered a synthesis of a synthesis. We might also ask ourselves whether all these versions distinctly reflect the essence of the Joycean hypotext they stem from. The answers to these questions do not seem evident; yet, a few of them can be ventured approximatively. On the one hand, Cage preserves the literal and particular vocabulary of the novel, which is laden with both Irish expressions and Joycean neologisms. Such peculiarities underscore the sonorous brightness of Cage's work. On the other, in Cage's new structure we can pinpoint asyntactic qualities that, being typical also of Joyce's novel, make the resulting text both indeterminate and highly evocative. Furthermore, as Richard's Kostelanetz —Cage's critic and artistic 'part-

[13] The first version consists of a compendium that included 682 pages of mesostics. It was even longer that Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. De la Torre Bueno, Cage's editor, considered it to be impossibly long and suggested shortening it significantly. This version was never published, even if a few documental images, mostly of the cover, can be found over the Internet. What little we know of this version comes through a series of anecdotes told by John Cage himself, and which were gathered over time by his critics and biographers. *Vid.* D. Revill, *op. cit.*

[14] *Vid.* Jannika Bock, *Concord in Massachusetts. Discord in the World. Henry Thoreau and John Cage*, p. 174, in which she deals with alternative versions of Cage's work.

[15] James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, p. 178. On the writing of these Joycean mesostics *vid*. M. Perloff, "John Cage Conceptualist Poet".

ner-in-crime'— has stated, both works share "[the] likewise scrupulously nonfocused and nonhierarchical, a work that characteristically ends with the direct suggestion to return to its beginning".[16] Expressing a completely new order, this compositional procedure results in a subsystem based on that proposed by Joyce for the reading of *Finnegans Wake*.

The strict method that Cage applied to reading of Joyce's work in order to identify its mesostic potential contrasts with the surprising, and therefore indeterminate, nature that the actual mesostics take on in the resulting text, and which fully corresponds with the artist's compositional principles. The result of all this is a verbal fabric that does not completely rely on content and grammar; instead, it depends on a combinatorial criterion which, creatively and compositionally, justifies itself by means of the repositioning of its title. According to these principles, Cage utilises punctuation as yet an extra random element that underpins a constant indeterminacy that undoubtedly relates to the artist's much-loved *I Ching*. Rather than serve the purposes of the text, these signs appear as textual interventions on a visual level, which reinforces the readers' certainty that they are facing a random, deliberately deconstructed recreation of *Finnegans Wake*.

Moreover, Cage's lexical recomposition and reorganisation implies a new close reading of the visual poetry taking place on the page, where the tribute paid to Joyce —cyphered in his surname and name— can actually be seen and sensed in a new textual reconfiguration of words. We can go so far as to state that Cage's mesostics take on a minimalistic signalling sense by centring themselves on the different pages as though they were suspended, intentionally repositioned to be contemplated. A new reading is thus activated, one that is both plastic and conceptual; this is a kind of reading that can be intellectually processed through its observation rather than acoustically. If, on the other hand, we were to focus on the listening of the resulting text, Cage's homage-interpretation would be completely lost since it is exclusively and visually encoded in a vertical reading. And yet, the text's sonic dimension determines a type of appropriation corresponding with the enunciative flow of irregular lines. These lines consist of words that can be either isolated or agglutinated —verbal elements that Cage used to call "wing words",[17] and which he placed either to the left or to the right of the nucleuses he created. Mesostics can thus be interpreted as a score to be performed sonically, as we will discuss in the following section of the essay.

[16] Richard Kostelanetz, *John Cage (Ex)Plained*, p. 40.
[17] *Vid.* J. Cage, *Silence. Lectures and Writings by John Cage.*

From Eye to Ear: Mesostics and their Reading

John Cage did not settle for the printed publication of his Joycean mesostics. As an aurally driven reader, he also enjoyed the public reading of his own pieces as vocal performances.[18] Rather than consider himself a 'poet' (even if such oral performances have regularly been associated with the notion of sound poetry), Cage thought of himself as a composer and performer, which evidently spurred his interest in experimenting with the sonorous aspects of language, just as he did with any other kind of sound object. Cage would often do his own readings, claiming that only he knew, according to his own expectations, how each piece should sound.

Being now read as scores to be sonically translated, these mesostics constitute 'pretexts', in the term's dual meaning —on the one hand, they should be considered sonic stimuli and, on the other, mediators with an indicative function; that is, they are vocal realisations that generate sonic impressions, which could be regarded as minimal acoustic epiphanies. Once again, Cage seems to be very much in tune with Joyce's spirit by sharing his interest in the sonorous resonances and evocations of words. However, Cage's interests, much more so than in the case of Joyce, seem to be focused on what words can communicate on a sonic-perceptual level rather than on their contents. This means that Cage seems to be attracted to the sonorous nature of words; i.e., to how they sound and what they sound like, not to what they actually mean or how they convey their meanings. We should remember that the text as score is justifiable not only in terms of the rhythm generated by the arrangement and distribution of words on the page, but also in terms of sonic contrasts resulting from lexical constellations, which, in time, are reinforced by their combinations and proximity. Similarly, Cage's mesostics are determined by the cadence and phrasing resulting from his use of enjambments and stanzaic pauses. Notwithstanding this, in his public performances, Cage often felt compelled to betray the stanzaic forms of his own mesostics. He is known to have confessed that, taken literally, the pauses between one

[18] *Vid.* J. Cage, *Writing for the Second Time through* Finnegans Wake. Even before his reading he shares a text also read out aloud about his relationship with *Finnegans Wake*, explaining the process underlying his second reading. The conference obviously determines the manner in which Cage's texts are to be apprehended by the audience, whose members may or may not be familiar with Joyce's work. Even though the audience is faced here with the selfsame rereading process, this seems more in tune with his own philosophy, considering that Cage did not enjoy recording his readings in a studio (*vid.* Al Filreis (presenter), *et al.*, "PoemTalk 135 Full Video: On John Cage's '*Writing for the Second Time through* Finnegans Wake'").

mesostic and another often result in a foreseeable, repetitive, and uninteresting pattern. It is because of this that Cage's sound performances —as is clear on his recordings— avoid such pauses, which gives his mesostics a very noticeable fluency. As a reader-performer, Cage reiterates that his mesostics, being re-writings of Joyce's texts, are for the most part "sound organisations".[19]

As we have seen, Cage's rewriting of *Finnegans Wake* is indeed a double performance —it lives both on the page and on a level of sound. As Nancy and Marjorie Perloff state in dialogue with Al Filreis, this twofold nature is tightly constituted, but at the same time, each one of Cage's mesostics varies in its materiality and purpose, thus producing disparate impressions where their visual aspect is deconstructed by sound and vice-versa.[20]

Roaratorio—*from Reading to (Music) Writing*

Ambitious as he was, John Cage decided to take his re-configuring of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* one step further by developing a radio-musical piece based on the novel. Commissioned by Klaus Schöning for his radio show (broadcast by Cologne's West Deutscher Rundfunk in October 1979), Cage's new piece was a sort of "acoustic adaptation" of the mesostics contained in *Writing for the Second Time through* Finnegans Wake.[21] He enriched his efforts with a trailblazing search for a sonic body for the references to music and sound that Joyce had included in his work. The piece was first entitled *Roaratorio*, but later extended and released under the title of *Roaratorio. An Irish Circus on* Finnegans Wake. In doing this, Cage combined his work for the German radio station with a different project commissioned by Pierre Boulez and his colleagues at France's IRCAM. The American artist thus began working on a new re-visitation of *Finnegans Wake* as an electroacoustic piece. We must also remember that, given Schöning's commission, *Roaratorio* belongs also in the *Hörspiel* genre, which entails a return to the literary tradition. *Roaratorio* as *Hörspiel*

[19] *Vid.* José Manuel Berenguer, and Carlos Gómez (curators and presenters), "John Cage. Notes towards A Re-Reading of the 'Roaratorio'", 01:50.
[20] *Vid.* Al Filreis (presenter), *et al.*, *op. cit.*
[21] R. Kostelanetz, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

is an experiment that combines the reading aloud of the text with musical instrumentation and soundscapes.[22]

The multifaceted conception of the project allows us to understand it as being part of a different 'reading' offered, and even demanded, by Cage's Joycean materials. Guided now by Joyce's own musical references, Cage managed to conceive a different experience of the text, one that was condensed in a one-hour piece and which required a materialised listening of spaces, situations, and places as they were referred to in *Finnegans Wake*. "Asked to add a 'musical background' to this declamation", notes Kostelanetz, "Cage decided to gather sounds recorded in every geographic place mentioned in Joyce's text".[23]

In order to identify these multiple Joycean references in his text, Cage based his work on the materials that Louis O. Mink collected in his Finnegans Wake *Gazetteer* (1978). Acknowledging the difficulty of retrieving many of these references to sound since they lay scattered around the world, Cage turned to friends who lived in different parts of the globe, as well as to several radio stations and their archives, in order to salvage some of the audio samples that he required.

The rest of his materials were gathered through a detailed yet extensive list of incidental sounds that he gleaned from Joyce's novel and which referred specifically to Ireland and, of course, to Dublin. With the list in hand and accompanied by his friend and colleague John David Fullemann, Cage embarked on a trip to catch *in situ* and *ex profeso* the most salient elements of this soundscape.[24] The sounds that he picked ranged from familiar noises like animal sounds, human parlance, and the racket of machinery and traffic in Dublin, to passages from the traditional ballads and popular songs that Joyce always cherished. Cage added to these a few tunes taken from instrumental Irish music that were either especially recorded for the project or performed live at the different launches of the resulting record.[25] In the end, the composition was rich in references that offered a documentary register of the sonic world to which Joyce alluded in

[22] The term *Hörspiel* defines a series of radio pieces conceived as 'radiotheatre'. It must be said that, in 1979, *Roaratorio* won Cage one of the most renowned awards in the fields of *Hörspiele* and radio art in Germany, the Karl Sczuka-Preis. *Roaratorio* would go on to win the Diapason d'Or and the Choc of *Le Monde de la Musique* in France.

[23] R. Kostelanetz, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

[24] Given the many anecdotes provided by collaborators, promoters, and critics regarding Cage's meticulous search, register, and assemblage of materials, I have summarised here only the most important events in order to provide but a faint idea of the enormous complexity of the project.

[25] Among Cage's musical guests were Joe Heaney (voice), Seamus Ennis (Irish bagpipe), Paddy Glackin (fiddle), Matt Malloy (recorder), Peadher, and Mell Mercier (bodhrán).

Finnegans Wake. It also allowed for different atmospheres to be recreated in the performance of the piece —the recording boasted various registers, but also superimposed them in order to create moments of enormously complex sonic density.[26]

Cage resorted once again to the *I Ching* —as he had done when defining the punctuation marks of the written text— to categorize the nearly two thousand audio samples he gathered along this process. These included voices, screams, yells, and other human sounds. Sounds from nature, such as the trickling of water, the howling of the wind, and thunderclap were also recorded. Obviously, musical expressions such as Gaelic chants and music performed on local instruments like the Irish bagpipe and the bodhrán drums played an important role in the project. With regard to the categorization of these sounds, Kostelanetz remembers the following:

> All these recordings were then gathered at IRCAM in Paris, where Cage and Fullemann spent a month assembling them by chance operations onto sixteen-track tape machines, making spectacularly dense acoustic mixes, at once cacophonous and euphonious, that, while they may vary in detail, are roughly similar in quality (and quantity) for the entire duration.[27]

Apart from this, Cage resumed writing in order to undertake what could be called yet another re-writing of *Finnegans Wake*, now in the form of a programme or user manual that he entitled ____,____ ____ *Circus on* ____ (1979).[28] The instructions detailed the manners in which Joyce's work —or any other work, for that matter— had to be either translated or transposed to a performative context now linked with an 'actor-less' sonic composition.[29]

Straddling randomness and certainty, Cage thus unfolded in this 're-visitation' of *Finnegans Wake* "one of the most complex and monumental" experiments in literature and music, as Vivian Abenshushan has stated.[30] Abenshushan goes on to claim that "a dense magma of superimposed, atomised, words and sounds vibrate by themselves, in absolute anarchy.

[26] *Vid*. Peter Dickinson (ed.), *Cage Talk: Dialogues with and about John Cage*, p. 222: Cage describes this process in an interview.
[27] R. Kostelanetz, *op. cit*., p. 151.
[28] *Vid*. J. Cage, [Realization of Circus on / John Cage]; these are images of the original manuscript.
[29] "The score of ___,___ ____ *Circus on* ____, as is stated within, provides a 'means for translating a book into a performance without actors, a performance which is both literary and musical or one or the other'. It instructs performers on how to derive chance-determined poems from the book being used, and asks them to combine a recitation of these texts with recordings of places and sounds in the book, in addition to live music. The score thus serves to transform literary works into circuses of sounds, music, words and poetry." (Ciaran Carson, "Cage Meets Carson in Belfast for *Owenvarragh*").
[30] Vivian Abenshushan, "A partir de cero: John Cage", p. 43.

As in a circus ring, all kinds of things happen all the time".[31] This circus consists of a playful and oneiric collage of sounds and disparate elements that can be heard at once, but nonetheless, these recordings also convey an important Joycean essence, as well as a "very Irish" character.[32]

The previous serves to explain the second half of the work's title. As for the term *Roaratorio* that is first present in the title, Cage borrows this Joycean neologism from *Finnegans Wake*, due to its sonic quality and its semantic implications. In a way, a roar —a wild and dark gesture— establishes in its utterance a dominion. Regarding the 'oratorical' part of this term, Cage intends to reference orality by means of a contrasting, and even contradictory, allusion to civilising traditions. In doing so, he underscores the most solemn and ritualised aspects of a prayer-like practice. This rereading and reinterpretation is Cage's most refreshing and provocative homage to James Joyce. Even from its title, the piece paves the way for the understanding of this work based on a myriad of juxtapositions of self-integrating, self-complementing, discursive elements.[33]

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In this article, we have seen how John Cage conducts a series of abysmal readings of *Finnegans Wake*, and how these condense themselves in multiple recreations. Similarly, the *Roaratorio* constitutes, rather than an adaptation, a product of those multifarious readings, which are fascinatingly reassembled in a complex electro-acoustic proposal, that was even re-presented and performed by integrating even other artistic languages such as video-art and dance.

Curiously enough, all pieces and versions stemming from Cage's Wake straddle the line between high fidelity and creative license with respect to Joyce's text. However, the musician's creative contradictions are not only justifiable but also fully legitimate, which revitalises, both separately and as a whole, the project to which they owe their existence.

These dense re-visitations to the no lesser dense *Finnegans Wake* are in themselves Cage's attempts to reconfigure and re-apprehend the novel. As intermedial re-appropriations, they have transcended the very text by

[31] *Idem*. Translation by Mario Murgía.

[32] *Cf*. A. Filreis, *et al*., *op. cit*.

[33] *Vid*. Ulrich Dibelius, *Moderne Musik nach 1945*, p. 491: For musicologists like Ulrich Dibelius, the title of the piece is contradictory in itself since it suggests loudness. The piece, however, is performed in a moderate frequency.

multiplying their own interpretive possibilities, as well as their own readings and decodings.

Cage would eventually return to *Finnegans Wake*. In 1984,[34] he wrote the song "Nouth upon Night" as a tribute to the recently deceased Cathy Berberian. Then he prepared a piano piece entitled *As SLow aS Possible*—also known as *ASLSP* (1985—, which references the closing passages of the novel.[35] This propeled him to write a new version of the same piece, an organ composition entitled *Organ²ASLP,* launched in 1987. Cage, however, would not live to see yet another presentation of his work in 2001, when the piece was presented, according to his wish, at an extremely slow pace and without any assistance from an instrumentalist. Composed for an especially designed organ located in a small church in Halberstadt, Germany, this piece has been sounding and developing continuously, in such a way that it will keep on producing new echoes of *Finnegans Wake* until the year 2640. "Words? Music? No: It's what's behind"[36] —that which keeps on resonating, as it also continues posing questions around Joyce's work. John Cage, as one of his most enthusiastic readers, has contributed his part to the never-ending dissemination of Joyce's oeuvre.

[34] In 1982, Cage also wrote a radio broadcast: *James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Eric Satie: An Alphabet.*
[35] *Vid*. "ASLSP": "Its title stands for 'As Slow(ly) and Soft(ly) as Possible,' and also refers to 'Soft morning city. Lsp!' from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*."
[36] James Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 226.

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Translated into English by Mario Murgia.

"The boarder incident prerepeated itself": A Study in Conflict

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Terence Killeen

I

"The boarder incident prerepeated itself".[1] This short sentence (for it is one, with a subject and a predicate) appears on page 81, lines 32-33 of *Finnegans Wake*. The sentence was inscribed very late in the composition of Part I Chapter 4, where it is to be found, and it is not thereafter altered. It was inserted in Joyce's hand in the galley proofs for Faber in 1937, not long before the book's publication in 1939.[2] Prior to that, but only very shortly prior, its core —not the whole sentence— was entered in Notebook VI.B 46 in the following form: "a boarder incident".[3] At this stage, it reads 'a boarder incident', rather than 'the'.

Before this point again, however, probably in 1936, Joyce had written the more standard phrase, "a border incident" in Notebook VI.B 44.[4] In the transition from 'a border incident' to 'a boarder incident' we can already see

[1] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 81, lines 32-33.
[2] Michael Groden (general ed.), *The James Joyce Archive*, vol. 49, p. 105.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. 40 p. 133.
[4] *Ibid.*, vol. 39, p. 298.

Joyce's creative process at work. As we know, much effort has been devoted to tracing the sources of these notebook entries, much of it very rewarding. As it happens, no particular source has been traced for this entry, but it is very likely that with 'a border incident' Joyce was consciously echoing a phrase frequently found in newspapers, and bearing in mind that this was 1937, the phrase might well have been in especially common usage around that time. We will come back to the precise meaning of this term.

But the transition from 'a border incident' to 'a boarder incident' is, as mentioned, intrinsically compositional, creative, not just an *aide-mémoire*. Before moving on to the implications of this change, we can generalise just a little from it about the nature of Joyce's note-taking. The most remarkable aspect of this exercise is how this little phrase could just be thrown down on a notebook page, on its own, and later be slotted into a piece of pre-existing text. And it is just one of quite a number in this and other notebooks with the same status. Did Joyce already know where it was going to go, or, more likely perhaps, was he just jotting it down with a view to future use somewhere, or perhaps future use nowhere, since a number of these phrases were never used? The fascination of the notebooks is perhaps this sense of closeness to a primary creative process before the composition of anything like a sustained text.

These are appropriately called 'textual units', because they are indeed units, a kind of minimal creative grain or atom that would grow and develop into something very large and very dense. It should be added that the enlightenment gained from notebook and draft studies is not greater insight into the 'meaning' of the text or the contextual thinking behind it; rather it is greater familiarity with a creative process that appears already to have factored in the kind of pretextual concepts that one would expect from most writers.

Taking then this crossed-out phrase, 'a boarder incident', Joyce made of it on the galley proof the sentence already cited: "The boarder incident prerepeated itself."[5] The most striking extra ingredient is of course 'prerepeated', which is not in the notebook. 'Prerepeated', as a word, is highly appropriate for this work: everything in it is 'prerepeated', already a repetition from the non-beginning; in the best deconstructive fashion, it had repeated itself even before it had happened. The little word 'boarder' also contains a great deal. As it stands, it hints at encroachment, at attack (the second definition of the word —and, just to be clear, it is a standard

[5] J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 81, lines 32-33.

English word— in the Oxford English Dictionary is "a person who forces their way on to a ship in an attack";[6] we may remember that 'prepare to repel boarders' is a well-known cry in many a pirate saga). The primary meaning of 'boarder', however, namely a person who receives accommodation and food in return for a payment, as in "The Boarding House" in *Dubliners*, is also operative in Joyce's use of it, as we shall see.

To return to Joyce's first inscription in this textual nexus, a 'border incident' usually refers to some kind of clash between border guards and would-be border crossers. It is clear that what we see on the page is derived from that primary meaning (almost all *Finnegans Wake* phrases, of course, require this kind of interpretive act where we divine a standard phrase behind some strange-looking one; to use Joyce's own example, behind "glance of frisky" we can hear,[7] though not see, 'glass of whiskey'). In fact, the two phrases, 'boarder incident' and 'border incident', are incredibly congruent: a border incident is almost invariably a boarder incident, or is seen as such: someone is seen as encroaching on another's border, as 'boarding' the territory the border is meant to define and defend.

Given that this short sentence —very short by *Finnegans Wake*'s standards— was inserted so late in the work, it does look as if it is meant to be explanatory in nature, to describe, unlikely though it sounds, some of the material surrounding it. At the very least, it could be considered a summary of what has been going on up to that point.

And what has been going on has indeed been about incursions and defence —about contestations and disputes: 'incident' slightly understates it. In fact, the word 'incident' is itself a euphemism —'border incidents', as newspapers and official spokespersons tend to call them, are very often violent (examples abound).

These early chapters of the book are much concerned with conflict and contestation. Following an initial encounter in the Phoenix Park in Part I Chapter 2, Chapters 3 and 4 largely re-enact this encounter, with a greater degree of violence involved each time. The point at which this sentence, "[t]he boarder incident prerepeated itself",[8] appears has been the moment of greatest physical threat and, indeed, physical force. The sources of some of this material are surprising but very characteristically Joycean. These chapters, Part I, Chapters 2, 3 and 4, as mentioned, contain some of the earliest writing in *Finnegans Wake* —the late arrival of our core

[6] "boarder. 2".
[7] J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 470, line 33.
[8] *Ibid*. p. 81, lines 32-33.

sentence is one of several extra flourishes added at a much later stage. The composition began with a draft of what became Chapter 2 in August 1923, and in the autumn and winter of 1923-1924 he drafted the rest of Chapter 2 and what became Chapters 3 and 4. At this early stage he was relying extensively on Irish newspaper reports for his core material and this works its way into the various contentions outlined in these chapters. For instance, the passage in which our core sentence is embedded is partially derived from the following report in the *Connacht Tribune*: "FIERCE STRUGGLE / Man With Mask and Iron Bar. / Wooden "Revolver."] […] The burglar then went to the door and Byrne caught hold of a long bar he had and with which he broke in the door."[9]

Joyce's note derived from this reads: "caught hold of a long bar / he had & with which he / broke in door".[10] This becomes in the text: "catching holst of an oblong bar he had and with which he usually broke furnitures".[11] So the source of this weighty passage is what one must regard as a minor affray in west Galway in 1923. This is not the only use to which this newspaper report is put, further on in the account of this intrusion we are told the following: "Byrne succeeded in taking the bar, and a wooden affair in the shape of a revolver fell from the intruder, who then became friendly and wanted to know if Byrne had the change of a £10 note and, if so, that he (the burglar) would give him back the £6 10s. taken from him last summer! Byrne said he had no money, and the burglar then left."[12]

This passage gets into Joyce's text in multiple ways, and indeed one can see why in the following passage:

> now a woden affair in the shape of a webley [a Webley being of course a well known mark of revolver] […] fell from the intruser who, […] whereupon became friendly and […] to know wanted […] if his change companion […] happened to have the loots change of a tenpound crickler about him at the moment, addling that hap so, he would pay him back the six vics odd, do you see, out of that what was taken on the man of samples last Yuni or Yuly, do you follow me, Capn? To this the other […] rather amusedly replied: Woowoo would you be grossly surprised, Hill, to learn that, as it so happens, I honestly have not such a thing as the loo, as the least chance of a tinpanned crackler anywhere about me at the present mohoment […].[13]

[9] "FIERCE STRUGGLE. Man with Mask and Iron Bar. Wooden Revolver".
[10] M. Groden, *op. cit.*, vol. 31, p. 222.
[11] J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 81, lines 31-32.
[12] "FIERCE STRUGGLE. Man with Mask and Iron Bar. Wooden Revolver".
[13] J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 82, lines 16-36.

The main point to be made about this is how closely it sticks to the humble newspaper it derives from, even down to the amounts: the six pounds ten shillings of the report becomes the ‘six vics odd’ of the *Wake* text, ‘vics’ being of course sovereign pounds with the monarch’s face on them.

Similarly on page 63 line 7 there is an account of another incident where one of the principal weapons is a ‘fender’. Just to clarify, especially in this North American context, a fender is not the mudguard or protective area around the wheel well of a vehicle (‘fender bender’), still less an electric guitar, but rather a low frame surrounding a fireplace to prevent burning coals from falling out on to the floor.

The fender mentioned here comes from the following report in the *Freeman’s Journal*:

> “THE “EXPLANATION” / Novel Way of Opening a Bottle of Stout.]: Richard Whitely, Patrick Farrell, and William Hannon were found guilty at the Commission, charged with having at an early hour of the morning of Sunday, October 7, attempted to break into Pickford’s Store, 6 Upper Sheriff street, with intent to steal goods. It was stated by P.C. Sutton that he and another constable saw the three prisoners at the gate of the store. Hannon was pushing the gate with his shoulder and the others were standing by. When they saw witness they moved to a dark doorway. Whitely was carrying a fender. When witness asked where he got the fender one of the men said “that is for you to find out.” Whitely, speaking from the dock, said they were only trying to open a bottle of stout by hammering it against the gate.[14]

There is a great deal more in this vein, and indeed extracts from this case, which are quite hilarious, weave their way throughout this passage on pages 62-63. More than that, it supplies a great deal of the basis of these pages of the book. Thus the *Freeman’s Journal* report on the same incident includes the following exchanges:

> The Lord Chief Justice (to the police witness)
> —I suppose you know how to draw the cork out of a bottle of stout (a laugh).
> “Yes,” replied the witness.
> The Lord Chief Justice: Was the sound you heard like trying to get the cork out of a bottle?
> Witness: Nothing like it (laughter).[15]

[14] “THE EXPLANATION. Novel Way of Opening a Bottle of Stout”, p. 9, col. 7.
[15] *Idem.*

This gives rise to: "This battering babel allover the door and sideposts, he always said, was not in the very remotest like the belzey babble of a bottle of boose which would not rouse him out o' slumber deep".[16]

One final instance: Maurice Behan, caretaker of the stores, said that he was in bed and heard heavy hammering at the gate."[17] This becomes: "the boots about the swan, Maurice Behan, […] said 'war prised safe in bed by hearing hammering on the pandywhank scale emanating from the blind pig and anything like it (oonagh! oonagh!) in the whole history of the Mullingcan Inn he never".[18]

I suppose the most remarkable feature of this last example is the preservation of the name Maurice Behan from the original report. It seems safe to assume that no one would have been more surprised by his unlikely apotheosis in the pages of *Finnegans Wake* than Mr Behan himself. This would no doubt be even more true of the real Connemara native Festy King who steps from the pages of a court case reported in the *Connacht Tribune* into an improbable immortality in the pages of *Finnegans Wake*, Part I Chapter 4: Maurice Behan, caretaker of the stores, said that he was in bed and heard heavy hammering at the gate.

I hasten to add that the discovery of this connection was made, inevitably, by Vincent Deane —it must have been quite a eureka moment to find in the newspaper report the rare word 'fender', confirming the link. The other important remark to make is that while *Finnegans Wake* may indeed appear, and be, fairly weird, it is not much weirder than some of its source material. This newspaper report, with the fender, the bottle of stout, and the question of whether the store caretaker would have been woken by the sound of someone hammering a bottle of stout off a gate, not to mention this unusual way of opening a bottle, is already, of its nature, a perfect candidate for honourable mention in the book.

The main point here, however, is the very democratic nature of these sources; they could hardly be more so. These are conflicts, but they are highly localised, far from earth-shattering in their implications. At no stage are more than two direct antagonists suggested. That does not matter, however: again and again we are told that these contestations are a figure for all conflicts, all battles. They all ultimately reduce to this, or conversely, these encounters are just as meaningful as the great world-historical ones. Just after the sentence which begins this discussion, we are

[16] J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 64, lines 8-11.
[17] "THE EXPLANATION. Novel Way of Opening a Bottle of Stout", p. 9, col. 7.
[18] J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 63, lines 3-8.

told the following: "The pair (whethertheywere Nippoluono engaging Wei-Ling-Taou or de Razzkias trying to reconnoistre the general Boukeleff, man may not say) struggled apairently for some considerable time, (the cradle rocking equally to one and oppositely from the other on its law of capture and recapture".[19]

So the antagonists could just as easily be Wellington and Napoleon as the west Galway burglar and the house dweller from which the story of this particular conflict derives, as we have seen. In the *sub specie aeternitas* perspective of this book, all conflicts are the same. The situation is most neatly summarised by the statement on page 78 lines 29-31: "each, [side] of course, on the purely doffensive since the eternals were owlwise on their side every time".[20]

The statement, clearly, is heavily ironic: the 'eternals' cannot be on each side at the same time, but each side believes they are. 'Doffensive' is also very telling: combining offensive and defensive, it conveys with tremendous economy the contradiction between a reality and a subjective belief, 'purely' suggesting self-exculpation in advance.

Some of the suggested contestants mentioned are very pointed; on the same page we find: "the two sides in New South Ireland and Vetera Uladh, bluemin and pillfaces, during the ferment With the Pope or On the Pope".[21]

These certainly confirm that the conflicts with which these chapters are concerned can have a highly political dimension. 'New South Ireland' presumably conveys the recently minted Southern Irish State, while 'Vetera Uladh' would suggest the clinging by the Northern political entity to a long-established political dispensation. 'Bluemin' and 'pillfaces' shows that racial difference is also one of the sources of contention. And, of course, 'With the Pope or On the Pope', with the capitalisation so suggestive of sloganeering, could hardly be more pointed. Throughout this early part of the book, we are plunged into a world of conflict. As early as the first line of the second page, where the reader is being given a tourist's guide to Dublin, we are told: "What clashes here of wills gen wonts, oystrygods gaggin fishygods!".[22] Indeed, the whole history of the relations between the southern Irish state and the Northern Irish entity until recently could be summed up in this slogan —"wills gen wonts – I will, you won't; I will, you won't", with the unfortunate Northern Catholic minority as the pig in

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 81-82, lines 33-2.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 78, lines 29-31.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 78, lines 26-28.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 4, lines 1-2.

the middle. And each side is of course equally convinced of the justice of its cause. It is significant, I think, that in Jacques Derrida's only extended commentary on *Finnegans Wake* (his main Joycean contribution was to do with *Ulysses*, as we know) he seized, as was his wont, on the phrase "he war",[23] and while, of course, he wove many variations around it, the primary sense of the word 'war', in English, remains very active throughout his discourse.[24]

This absolute equivalence that the book seems to posit between the sides —any side— in any possible conflict does raise something of a problem for a reader. Here another brief excursus is required into the nature, or some approximation to the nature, of *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce told Harriet Weaver, when she asked him in July 1922 what he would write next after *Ulysses*, that he thought he would write "a history of the world".[25] And anyone who goes very far into the book, let alone the commentary around it, will be aware of its universalising ambitions. This is an attempt, on one level, to write a general theory of universal history. Its apothegms, its prescriptions, are meant to have a universal bearing. A sententious declaration such as "[s]o true is it that therewhere's a turnover the tay is wet too and when you think you ketch sight of a hind make sure but you're cocked by a hin" is in some way meant to have a generalised application,[26] to be a piece of advice to the reader (or at least a parody of such) even if the actual content of the advice is somewhat obscure.

Viewed, as the book does, in this global perspective, it may well be that all conflicts are indeed morally equivalent. Relevant here is Richard Ellmann's report of a conversation between Joyce and Samuel Beckett about the impending second World War. Beckett, he says, could see that it might have a reason; Joyce could see none. "What was worse," Ellmann says, "it was distracting the world from reading *Finnegans Wake*, in which the unimportance of wars in the total cycle of human activity was made perfectly clear" (one presumes this obviously ironical remark also derives from Beckett's account to Ellmann).[27] This biographical snippet supports the pattern I have been tracing in these early chapters of the book.

It is symptomatic in this connection that commentators —all commentators— have great difficulty in determining who the antagonists in these multiple encounters are. In the initial account in Part I Chapter 2 it is

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 258, line 12.
[24] Jacques Derrida, "Two Words for Joyce", pp. 145-159.
[25] Richard Ellman, *James Joyce*, p. 537.
[26] J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 12, lines 15-17.
[27] R. Ellman, *op. cit.*, p. 728.

clear that one of the figures involved is the book's hero —HCE (who I so far got by without mentioning)— while the other is an apparently younger man called the Cad, or sometimes Gill. As the incident is retold and retold in the two subsequent chapters, however, it becomes increasingly harder to tell the pair apart. One can see Bill Cadbury, for instance, in his account of the chapters' textual genesis, struggling to clarify just who is doing what.[28] The same applies to Adaline Glasheen and,[29] as I have said, to a greater or lesser degree, all commentators. It is difficult not to conclude that this confusion is quite deliberate, and that we are not meant to be able properly to tell them apart. Such a policy would be in accordance with the utter equivalence that Joyce seems to want to accord to these —and any— antagonists in any given conflict.

But for us, here, now, —especially for us, here, now— the grounds of this Olympian indifference are by no means so apparent. Is there never a conflict where an excess of power, perhaps all the power, is on one side; where one side is clearly the aggressor and another the invaded? To sharpen the question further: in every border incident, are both sides —the custodians of the border and those who seek to transgress that limit— always in the identical moral position? If there is an issue here, *Finnegans Wake* is of no help in that respect. And I think this is a valid question because, as I have said, *Finnegans Wake* does on one level profess to be a global view of and judgment on world history. And while this Olympian perspective can be admired —and has been admired— perhaps it is worth rethinking this critical endorsement in the light of actual 'boarder incidents' throughout today's world.

II

"Luckily there is another cant to the questy".[30] In other words, a different kind of answer emerges if we change the terms; change the term, that is, from conflict to persecution. If we look at some of what goes on in the book through that perspective, a less Jupiterian attitude emerges. We are acquainted with Bloom's treatment by the Citizen in "Cyclops". Despite the multiple qualifications now brought to bear on that encounter, it remains an instance of persecution in action, especially given the passive-aggressive support most of the other pub occupants offer to Bloom's attacker.

[28] Bill Cadbury, "'The March of a Maker': Chapters 1.2-4", pp. 66-98.
[29] Adaline Glasheen, *Third Census of Finnegans Wake*, p. xxiv.
[30] J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 109, line 1.

There is at least one instance where something similar, with of course massive differences, occurs in the early part of *Finnegans Wake*. This brings me to something which you have no doubt well forgotten by now, namely the other, primary meaning of 'boarder', which is a person who is given food and accommodation on regular basis in return for a payment. This meaning is also relevant to the *Wake* because HCE does, towards the end of Part I Chapter 3, undergo a verbal, and would-be physical, attack from a figure who is a visitor to Dublin and who is a boarder, ("digging" is the key word here) apparently in a premises in Leixlip,[31] though in an earlier draft he appeared to have been staying in HCE's own hotel. The source of this visitor's anger is far from clear —it seems to have to do with damage to his coat— but more to the point is the intensity of his fury with HCE. There is no question here as to who is the aggressor and who the victim, and that the victim is HCE, whatever the identity of his attacker. HCE, in the course of this attack, sits it out, uncomplaining, refusing to retaliate, "anarchistically respectsful of the liberties of the noninvasive individual".[32] Most importantly, there is an explicit allusion to Odysseus's encounter with Polyphemus in *The Odyssey*, which cannot help but be seen as referring also to the Cyclops episode of *Ulysses*: "nobodyatall with Wholyphamous".[33] The contrast between 'nobody at all' and 'wholly famous' certainly shows a disequilibrium between the two sides, even if, ironically, the reference actually comes from HCE's assailant. With that allusion in the background, the sense of persecution is inescapable, despite the many comic trappings. So this is one instance where the law of 'wills gen wonts', of a parity of disesteem, does not hold. It may be relevant that this episode forms the climax of Part I Chapter 3 and Joyce may have wanted to endow this ending with a special flourish.

There are many other instances of persecution in the text, most obviously the treatment of Shem in Part I Chapter 7, which, beginning as an impersonal indictment, ends up as a personal charge sheet, in which Shem is made to 'stand forth' and receive the verdict of his intensely hostile interlocutor. The dice, however, are too heavily weighted against Shem, the outcome is perhaps too predictable, for it to be a wholly satisfactory example of the persecutory impulse I have in mind. As Adaline Glasheen remarked, the whole chapter, with its strongly autobiographical dimension, is actually a vindication of the writer figure Shem, even if ironically

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 69, line 33.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 72, lines 16-17.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 73, line 9.

relayed through a hostile witness.[34] So it does not quite work in the terms I am adducing.

More germane to this quest is a passage on pages 61-62, which is emblematic of much of the book's approach to persecution and rejection, in all its senses. Unfortunately the passage is something of a textual mess; this is not the time or place to go into that; I have done so elsewhere.[35] The controversial textual scholar, Danis Rose, with whom no word shall be impossible, has indeed sorted it out, but by means whose validity has still to be assessed.[36]

Leaving all that aside, the passage may be condensed and presented in the following form:

> The seventh city […] his citadear of refuge, whither […] the hejirite had fled […] murmured, would rise against him with all which in them were […] do him hurt, poor jink, […] as were he made a curse for them, […] the common or ere-in-garden castaway, […] in red resurrection to condemn so they might convince him […] of their proper sins.[37] (*FW*. 61-62)

This statement, presented in this way, is remarkably clear: Dublin, the seventh city of Christendom, as we know from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where HCE had taken refuge after a hejira, or flight, turned against him (this is 'murmured' in the sense of giving expression to muted discontent), threatened him and condemned him for having committed sins that were ultimately their own.

The idea of HCE as pharmakos or scapegoat is of course quite prevalent in the book. This is an unusually direct expression of it; but it is here that one may perhaps locate the work's moral centre, if it has one. This extremely slippery figure, HCE, identifiable only by three initials, does appear to carry the sins of the world and is duly punished for it. The book narrates his fall and, being of course a universal chronicle, it also narrates, from its Olympian perspective, his rise, but the reality of his persecution is not elided. This is a point made as long ago as the first monograph on the book, by Campbell and Robinson, but it is worth leaning on it a little more in our current context.[38] He had come to the city from afar, an immigrant,

[34] A. Glasheen, *op. cit*., p. xlii.
[35] Terence Killeen, "'Tackling 'the Errears and Erroriboose': Another Look at the Rose/O'Hanlon *Finnegans Wake*".
[36] J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, pp. 49-50.
[37] J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, pp. 61-62.
[38] Joseph Campbell and Henry M. Robinson, *A Skeleton Key to* Finnegans Wake, p. 175.

he became established in the city, he married a local woman, he had three children; at some stage the city turned on him.

The end of Part II Chapter 3 enacts a very similar undoing. Campbell and Robinson, back in the idealising 1940s, made much of the well-known speech of justification by HCE —"[g]uilty but fellows culpows!"[39]— as his ultimate self- exoneration, but it is followed, at the end of the chapter, by a commentary which seems to enact his ritual hanging: "Slip on your ropen collar and draw the nosebag on your head".[40] And similarly: "Isn't it great he's swaying above us for his good and ours. Fly your balloons, dannies and dennises! He's doorknobs dead!"[41] This is the outcome of the judgement of the citizenry on the "myterbilder" who came to live amongst them.[42] And at the end of the chapter, as we know, HCE is left alone in his pub, slumped over a chair amid the glasses and the overturned stools. Hardly an apotheosis, but rather the outcome of a sustained campaign of persecution which, despite its many comic trappings, testifies to a serious intolerance and even xenophobia: "You can't impose on frayshouters like os",[43] which includes of course 'Free Staters'.

In a more general way, John Gordon is, I believe, correct in his overall reading of the saga of this strange figure who is best known by his initials.[44] In his seven-stage plotting of the fate of HCE, Gordon outlines a tale of almost unremitting catastrophe, from the hero's beginning as a young invader, to his decline and fall as a "zooless partiark", a Noah abandoned even by the animals of his ark.[45] And public obloquy certainly forms part of that condition.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the sentence with which we began, and approach from a different, less thematic angle. Most striking about it is the concision, the economy with which so much information is packed into so small a compass. Into the little phrase 'boarder incident', at least three distinct ideas are packed: 'border incident', 'boarder incident' in the sense of an episode with a would-be 'boarder', or transgressor of borders, and 'boarder incident', involving a boarder, a person paying for accommodation and food. This degree of compression confirms one's sense that *Finnegans Wake* suffers not from a deficit of meaning, but from an

39 J. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, p. 363, line 20.
40 *Ibid.*, p. 377, line 8-9.
41 *Ibid.*, pp. 377-378, lines 36-2.
42 *Ibid.*, p. 377, line 26.
43 *Ibid.*, p. 378, line 26.
44 John Gordon, *Finnegans Wake: A Plot Summary*.
45 J. Joyce, *Selected Letters*, p. 326.

excess of it, and that at least one reason why it is written the way it is is that if it were done in any more straightforward way it would be endlessly long. So that not only our little phrase, but indeed the whole book, is a massive compression, with everything ultimately circling around a central but probably unreachable core.

In this connection, and I hope this is not at a wild remove from our ostensible topic, I recall once attending a lecture by a cosmic physicist, Dennis W. Sciama. All of what he said entirely escapes me —it did then, and even more so now— except for his very last sentence, which was, or nearly was: "We can at least say that the universe is a singularity." I was sufficiently interested, though only much later, to look up 'singularity' in this sense, and will here share the definition without claiming fully to understand it: "A point at which a function takes an infinite value, especially in space-time when matter is infinitely dense, such as at the centre of a black hole."[46]

'Infinitely dense' and 'black hole': many a weary reader has probably used these terms after a stretch of reading *Finnegans Wake*. In this respect —sheer density— *Finnegans Wake* has no rival in literature. So it is indeed, in its own terms, a singularity.

[46] "singularity", *Oxford Dictionary of English*.

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Rewriting *Dubliners*: Parent-Child Relations in James Joyce's and Donal Ryan's "Eveline"

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Hedwig Schwall

Ever since Joyce published his short story cycle *Dubliners* in 1914 the "scrupulous meanness" he prided himself on as the watermark of his style has done the job: his stories have been a juicy bone of contention among scholars. It is one of the most famous short story cycles ever written, and so it is no wonder that, a century later, Thomas Morris wanted to mark its anniversary. Though neither Irish nor a "Joycean academic",[1] as he starts the introduction to *Dubliners 100*, he is a seasoned literary editor. He invited fifteen contemporary Irish fiction authors to rewrite one story each, translating it into the social, political, cultural and psychological context of the twenty-first century.[2] As Éilís Ní Dhuibhne indicated:

[1] Thomas Morris, "Strange Traffic: An Introduction of Sorts", p. VII.

[2] Of course this meant that the 'cycle' character was lost, except in the fact that some characters reappear in different stories. Though the formula of *Dubliners 100* aimed at individual rewrites, it is worth remarking here that Joyce's *Dubliners* was the first twentieth-century short story cycle of its kind. Though Sherwood Anderson claims to have invented the genre (Susan Garland Mann, *The Short Story Cycle*, p. 7) his *Winesberg, Ohio* was published in 1919, so five years after Joyce's feat (which had been ready for publication much earlier). It is worth noticing that in Garland's introduction to the short story cycle she starts with *Dubliners*, which is then followed by nothing but American writers. Of the contributors to *Dubliners 100* two have published masterly short story cycles: Donal Ryan in *The Spinning Heart* (2012) and Mary Morrissy with *Prosperity Drive* (2016).

> There is more than one way to be inspired by a pre-existing story. A writer could base a new story on the main character, or one of the minor characters. She or he can use its storyline to structure a new version fleshed with different details, take its theme and base a newly invented storyline on that. The choice could be to emulate the style of the original - not a bad exercise for any writer, when the original style is Joyce's in *Dubliners*.[3]

Of course one can also do "several of these things simultaneously",[4] or "make everything new, including the very skeleton of the story".[5] To discuss rewrites of Joyce I picked "Eveline", the first of the 'adolescence' stories in *Dubliners*, because it is the shortest and densest of the whole volume, and because Donal Ryan did a splendid job rewriting it. It became not just "its own thing in its own right",[6] but was shortlisted for the Irish Short Story of the Year in 2014. And short these stories are: both the original and the 'cover' are but five pages long. As Joyce disseminated so many contradictions in Eveline's focalisation there were many interpretations open to Ryan. The skeleton of the story, we might say, is X is invited by Y to leave; X wants to come along but cannot decide because parent Z needs X. Ryan changed genders, direction of migration (in twenty-first-century Dublin immigration is the so-called problem rather than emigration) and agency (it is X who invites Y to leave with him) so one might say he even fiddled with the skeleton; but what Ryan did keep is the underlying psychological condition of the original protagonist, a hysteric structure which will steer all interactions in both stories. This article will consist of four parts: first I will mention major voices in 'Eveline criticism' of both established and younger Joyce scholars; second present views on hysteria by leading psychoanalysts such as Nestor Braunstein, Elisabeth Bronfen and Lucien Israel; third I briefly discuss Joyce's story to finally analyse Ryan's refraction of this problem of failed adolescence.

Joyceans on "Eveline"

Many students who read "Eveline" are lured, like Eveline herself, by the sadness of her story of the innocent girl oppressed by her alcoholic father who recalls "her promise to keep the home together" and then fails to em-

[3] Éilis Ní Dhuibhne, "*Dubliners 100.* 15 New Stories Inspired by the Original *Dubliners*", p. 144.
[4] *Idem.*
[5] *Idem.*
[6] T. Morris, *apud* Laura Barrios Albuena, *Analysis and Translation of Donal Ryan's "Evelyn", A Cover Version of Joyce's "Eveline"*, p. 12.

bark on a journey with her almost-fiancé Frank.[7] Over the course of the past hundred years not too many critics have paid attention to the story; maybe they thought, with Sean Latham, that it merely illustrated "the exhaustion of the narrative conventions governing Victorian and Edwardian fiction".[8] In 1941 Harry Levin only mentions it as "one of Joyce's "annals of frustration",[9] without going into details. In 1969 Warren Beck suggested that Frank's promises may be false; rather than taking her as his wife to Buenos Ayres he might only take her to Liverpool where she may end up in prostitution.[10] Hugh Kenner thought so too; according to Margot Norris he "turned the *Dubliners* story 'Eveline' upside down by listening to a couple of commas": "'He had fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres [comma] *he said* [comma] and had come over to the old country just for a holiday'".[11] So Kenner concluded that "[t]he hidden story of 'Eveline' is the story of Frank, a bounder with a glib line, who tried to pick himself up a piece of skirt".[12] Katherine Mullin endorses this, observing that "Eveline would also have been vulnerable to […] the competing and conflicting emigration propaganda current in Ireland at the turn of the century".[13] Randy Kershner points out that Eveline's final decision not to go with Frank is owed to the fact that she "has listened too closely to the libretto [of *The Bohemian Girl*]"[14] and concludes that "she really has no choice but to fictionalize her choices".[15] The mentioning of "the cinder path" makes Josephine Sharoni think of another text that may have fed Eveline's imagination,[16] the Cinderella story, where another young woman is weighed down with housework, her mother dead.[17] Indeed, whether picked up in fairy tales, opera or propaganda, Eveline is definitely fuelled by sad and exciting tall tales, but why does Kershner say that she cannot *but* "fictionalize her choices"?[18]

This question leads us from Frank's hidden story to the deeper-flowing secret of Eveline herself, into which Frank's is a mere tributary: it is the secret which Eveline, throughout the short story, keeps hiding from herself. In a previous, Lacanian interpretation I made of Joyce's story I argue

[7] James Joyce, *Dubliners*, p. 33.
[8] Sean Latham, "Hating Joyce Properly", p. 125.
[9] Harry Levin *apud* Patrick A. McCarthy, "Naming and Not Naming in Joyce's 'Eveline'", n.p.
[10] Warren Beck *apud* P. A. McCarthy, *ibid.*, n.p.
[11] Hugh Kenner *apud* Margot Norris, *Suspicious Readings of Joyce's* Dubliners, p. 54; my emphasis.
[12] *Idem.*
[13] Katherine Mullin *apud* M. Norris, *ibid.*, p. 54.
[14] Randy Kershner *apud* P. A. McCarthy, *op. cit.*, n.p.
[15] R. Kershner *apud* M. Norris, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
[16] J. Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
[17] Josephine Sharoni, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
[18] R. Kershner *apud* M Norris, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

that Eveline has an ambiguous, incestuous relationship with her father, implying love and hate.[19] Where do the two children come from whom Eveline has to care for? Is the father a tyrant, 'going for' her brothers and threatening her, or is he endearing —"becoming old lately; he would miss her"?[20] Eveline never properly subscribed to the rules of society (in Lacanian parlance, she never realized the Name of the Father, never quite accepting symbolic castration —a position endorsed by Sharoni). This ambiguous relation to the laws of society and hence to language shows first of all in a person's relation to commitment to promises. Margot Norris tackles this problem as an isolated one, pointing out the contrast between saint Margaret Mary Alacoque's promises to establish peace in the home and Eveline's promise to Frank which has been "left sketchy and undetailed".[21] Indeed, Eveline has only 'consented' to go away with Frank, a verb choice which minimalizes her enthusiasm.[22] Frank Scholes stresses Eveline's indecisiveness: "She tried to weigh each side of the question" until the "panic attack at the dock" strikes: "her distress that her endless, judicious weighing of pros and cons has come to an end before it has produced a reliable resolution to her dilemma".[23] In my article I showed that Eveline is bent on maintaining this ambiguous relation with her father because it allows her to remain non-committal to life; she can pretend to do the household and work at the Stores while really living in her imagination, stylizing the Other, the source of authority, as ogres or vicious women, in terms modelled on the stories she hears and daydreams about. But when the distinction between real and imagined world starts to blur it is the Other, the unprocessed libido of the mother which takes over; she loses agency and is 're-membered' by the mOther. In that panic her usual images and symbols don't work anymore, anxiety takes over and paralyses the girl. But the impossibility of promising, I argued, has been there all along, as it is characteristic for pathological hysterics to want to remain ensconced in their narcissistic bubble rather than to commit to any cause. So I ascribed Joyce's final switch from free indirect speech to the direct description "[s]he set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave

[19] Hedwig Schwall, "Mind the Gap: Possible Uses of Psycho-analysis in the Study of English Literature".
Terence Brown notes that Joyce may have been inspired by "a (well-known) […] Victorian pornographic novel, in which the heroine has sexual intercourse with her father […] entitled *Eveline*" (Terence Brown, "Notes", p. 253).
[20] J. Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
[21] M. Norris, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
[22] *Ibid.*, p.63.
[23] Frank Scholes, *apud* M. Norris, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

him no sign of love or farewell or recognition" to a switch in Eveline's perception from neurotic (still in control) to psychotic (flooded by the unconscious).[24] Yet Joyce makes his heroine very cunning again in her self-exiling silence: ultimately we cannot know how much agency there is in the 'setting' of the face and the behaviour 'like an animal': is she petrified or is this a posture; or a combination, the proffering of utter vulnerability as a last resource of an arch-actress? Sean Latham's argument about the end is unclear in a different way. On the one hand he argues that Eveline's vision is "neither purely debilitating nor hopelessly blinkered [...] but becomes enfolded within the structures of an all-too-familiar marriage plot from which neither she nor Joyce can imagine an escape".[25] On the other hand he states that Eveline plays "a key role in Joyce's mythologization", in that it shows the boundaries of "Naturalism" while marking Joyce's career here "as one of the opening gambits of literary Modernism".[26] Norris notices how Eveline is like Flaubert's Madame Bovary: an "impressionable young woman" who "loves the sentimental and melodramatic novel" which such women "take as models for their own choices" but does not go into the matter.[27] I find it hard to believe Joyce could not escape from an all-too familiar marriage plot —on the contrary, I think he wanted to illustrate how his Bovary-like character fared, and did such a good job that he managed to re-stage this major heroine of Modernism in short story format, in Eveline.

Madame Bovary, published in 1856, is the first famous hysteric, and a novel which met with huge *succès de scandale* in the following years. Flaubert was a friend of Charcot, the main psychiatrist of L'Hôpital Salpêtrière in Paris, where he developed his theories about hysteria in the 1870s-1880s. Charcot also organized 'show days' for visitors, on which his hysterics obliged having crises, a certain lady, Augustine, being foremost among these acting patients.[28] Inspired, Freud wrote his ground-breaking first work, *Studies on Hysteria*, together with Josef Breuer, in 1895. In their study they argue that hysterics have an ambiguous relationship with figures in authority, due to a (mostly phantasized) seduction scene from their early childhood. Hysterics, the authors maintain, are very suggestible and their bodies are easily flooded by their drives (*Triebe*).[29] Later, in "Hysterical Phantasies

[24] J. Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 34
[25] S. Latham, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 125.
[27] M. Norris, *op. cit.,* p. 54.
[28] For Charcot and the Salpêtrière *vid*. Manni Waraich and Shailesh Shah, "The Life and Work of Jean Martin Charcot (1825-1893): 'The Napoleon of Neuroses'".
[29] Mary Lowe-Evans, "Joyce & Incest", p. 477. Lacan will specify that drives have to be considered as uncastrated libido, or *jouissance*, which makes a person repeat the same patterns of behaviour endless-

and their Relation to Bisexuality" (1908) Freud specifies that the hysteric's main difficulty is to decide on anything, including their negotiations of being gendered.[30] In her article on Jen Shelton 's study *Joyce and the Narrative Structure of Incest* (2006), which includes "Eveline", Mary Lowe-Evans subscribes to Shelton's definition of incest as "a specific, gendered power relation in which the father makes use of his greater physical, social, and narrative powers in order to coerce the girl to accede to his will"; it is then up to the daughter to come up with competing "revisions yet the master's interpretation inevitably prevails".[31] Shelton starts off "considering Freud's *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* as an insistently incestuous text that refuses to allow the daughter to tell her story" and then proceeds by demonstrating how Joyce employs the incest narrative, not to valorize it as Freud had done, but to subvert his own authorial power".[32] Again I beg to disagree, and suggest we heed Hugh Kenner's warning that "Joyce delights in seducing and betraying the reader in order to expose reader fatuousness" and closely follow "Eveline's own interpretive crisis".[33]

Contemporary Theories on Hysteric Structures

In order to do so I will first summarize the theories of Nestor Braunstein, Elisabeth Bronfen and Lucien Israël on the pathological hysteric.[34] I do not follow these Freudian thinkers because Joyce may have been familiar with Freud or Charcot, but because it simply remains a curious thing that, whether early or late twentieth century descriptions of hysteria, they strikingly converge with the contradictory elements Joyce disseminated in Eveline.[35] I will summarize the pathology in three points.

ly. This differs from desire, 'castrated' libido, where the energy of the drives is socialized. which allows a person to realize their proper potential, their destiny.

[30] *Vid.* Sigmund Freud, "Hysterische Phantasien und ihre Beziehung zur Bisexualität (1908)", p. 194.

[31] Mary Lowe-Evans, "Joyce & Incest", p. 477.

[32] *Idem.*

[33] M. Norris, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

[34] As I argued in the *Irish University Review* (*vid.* H. Schwall, "Forms of Hysteria in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Stephen Hero*") there is also a healthy form of hysteria (as illustrated in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*) and a fundamental one, very well developed in the works of John Banville, where protagonists are often actors, and deal professionally with the fact that at the centre of the human subject there is but a gap, a lack of self-knowledge.

[35] Yet it is interesting to observe how famous Charcot was in literary circles, even in Ireland; he was even praised in *Dracula* when two "student(s) of the brain" discuss hypnotism and "the mind of the great Charcot —alas that he is! no more!" (Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, p. 171).

First, hysterics are *histrionic* and *masochistic*, preferring to act as innocence betrayed.[36] Lucien Israël stresses the point of their ingrained theatricality, their need "to display themselves"; yet the 'message' always remains ambiguous.[37] Often following the model of Beauty and the Beast, the authoritative figure is stylized as a beast, though the hysteric also loves him. Braunstein is surprised at the frequency of this scenario of the brutal, violent tyrant which corresponds, if not to social truth, then at least to the hysteric's imagination.[38] But ambiguity characterizes not just the relationship to authority. Bronfen points out how these patients hide and show at the same time, dithering in their affections: "[i]f her self-display […] aims to publicly confess her intimate trauma, to broadcast the family as site of the unhappy marriage of sexuality and alliance, it is intriguing that it becomes an endless and indeterminate vacillation".[39] The hysteric is driven by a libido of vulnerability,[40] yet a beautiful soul. Like Cinderella, she is the plaintive victim. Though being humiliated and betrayed, she is noble, worthy to be regarded as such by the Other.[41] The hysteric is both discreet and revolutionary: she "makes manifest what is latent —the violence, sacrifice, and incest underlying the bourgeois family", yet she will protect that same family.[42] And, though maybe limited in her means, she is generous: whether in the servant-like or the more queenly aspect of Cinderella, whether her role is regal or menial, the hysteric will feel able to fulfil the needs of the Other, the person in authority, like the Prince who finds that only Cinderella can perfectly fill the shoe he cherished. [43.]

Second, the hysteric is insatiable. Whenever something is offered to her, it is not enough: she suffers from an *unfulfillable desire*.[44] As she is not energized by socialized desire, but by her own undiluted libido (jouissance)

[36] Nestor Braunstein, *La Jouissance. Un concept lacanien*, p. 208.
[37] Lucien Israël calls this "het *te zien geven*", "*donner à voir*", having material for display (Lucien Israél, *Hysterie, sekse en de geneesheer* , p. 62).
[38] "un bourreau sanguineaire [...] l'être brutal, grossier, violent […] l'actualisation nécessaire d'un fantasme masochiste. […] le couple de la belle et la bête apparaît avec une étonnante fréquence dans les cabinets d'analyse" (N. Braunstein, *op. cit*., p. 210).
[39] Elisabeth Bronfen, *The Knotted Subject. Hysteria and Its Discontents*, p. 120.
[40] *Ibid*., pp. 33-34.
[41] "Plaintive, victime, objet d'humiliations, de trahisons, d'incompréhensions et d'ingratitudes, c'est une belle âme, dépositaire imméritée de sévices et de malheurs. Elle s'offre comme objet au regard et à l'ouïe de l'Autre" (N. Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 208)
[42] E. Bronfen, *op. cit*., p. 121.
[43] "Être dans le fantasme l'objet qui assure la jouissance du partenaire de l'amour pour nier ainsi la castration (de soi-même) c'est quelque chose qui l'amène à occuper une place préférentielle, à se rendre indispensable – dans le fantasme – à l'Autre. (N. Braunstein, *op. cit*., p. 207)
[44] "La seconde beauté de l'hystérique c'est la belle indifférence […] elle se soustrait alors à l'hommage ou à la réaction qu'elle a suscités. […] Son désir est toujours un désir insatisfait" (N. Braunstein, *op. cit*., p. 209)

she is subject to the recurrence of the drives. She does not aim at fulfilment; 'feasible' things are not 'the real thing'. Instead she desires desire itself, pure longing: she will always find a lack in the figure of authority which she can then promise to fulfil. Cultivating desire of the desire also means that routine demands and real choices are overruled by a "superabundance of phantasy" which often leads to a confusion in the "distinction between phantasy and reality".[45] As we saw, this implies that the hysteric refuses to make choices. And choices must be made constantly: the rules of a culture have to be negotiated to find one's place in a range of professional, affective, gendered positions. Here too the hysteric dithers: "re-posing the question […] 'am I a man or a woman?'".[46] The inability to decide causes crises that will be fought out in the 'home' of the drives, the body: "The hysteric uses her body, *knotting together strife and gender* […] She vacillates between accepting and questioning the paternal metaphor as the law dictating her being"[47] —a vacillation which will sometimes end in complete paralysis, as Braunstein observes when the hysteric "offers the Other an unconscious or dead body while remaining curious to see how the Other will react to this challenge of her body, surrendered to abandon and anaesthesia".[48]

Third, failing to commit herself to a cause the pathologic hysteric has no specific aims for her future, no duties worth taking to heart in the present and no responsibility for any consequences of events she has not chosen. As the pathological hysteric sacrifices fulfilment to live for an unfulfillable desire, she lives in a constant state of suspense. The hysteric lives at a remove from reality, and Braunstein sums this up in the Sleeping Beauty syndrome. This young (never-aging) girl is supremely disinterested in the routines of daily life, dreaming instead of some paradise of happiness. She does not have to work for that bliss, it has to come from the Other. As pathological hysterics refuse to be rooted in a reality, "they do not fight for a cause, do not want a child, or engage seriously in work".[49]

[45] Sigmund Freud, *apud* E. Bronfen, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
[46] E. Bronfen, *op. cit.*, p. 120, 121.
[47] E. Bronfen, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
[48] "offrant à l'Autre un corps évanoui ou mort qui est observé de l'extérieur par un regard anxieux de capter ce que fait cet Autre face à son corps laissé à l'abandon et à l'anesthésie" (N. Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 206). Bronfen, too, observes how "psychic material […] has been brought forth at a particular site of the body: the lump in the throat, the anaesthecized limb, the disturbance of vision" (E. Bronfen, *op. cit.*, p. 33)
[49] "La belle au bois dormant" […] rêve d'un réveil futur dans un paradis de bonheur mais […] entre temps, attend tranquillement l'arrivée d'un désirant qui la réveille. Le désir ne la concerne pas; elle représente l'incarnation de l'absence de désir. L'action est toujours suspendue et, quand finalement elle aura lieu, ce sera en refusant les conséquences […] lutter pour une cause, avoir en enfant, agir

Joyce's Eveline

Joyce's Eveline acts as innocence betrayed. From the start, she is histrionic: when the reader finds her sitting at the window it is not so much the outer world which comes in view, but the "window curtains".[50] These very theatrical props are more substantial than the view, and more penetrating to her perception: "in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne".[51] It is also significant that Eveline is "tired" rather than excited at the prospect of moving to Argentina,[52] which suggests that the heroine is just having one of her extended daydreams. It is one in which she casts herself as Beauty, with her father as the Beast. Indeed from her early childhood she was chased into the house by him wielding his "blackthorn stick",[53] later he would 'go for' her brothers and threaten her as well. Yet, while depicting herself as vulnerable, she imagines the home as a cosy one, and though the narrative voice tells us there is a weekly wrangle over food, that all siblings have left and that the father is a brute, we also hear Eveline imagining that "[i]n her home anyway she had shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her",[54] and that "[h]er father was becoming old lately" and "could be very nice".[55] But then again she is a real Cinderella: "Of course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business".[56] More specifically she has to dust every week;[57] yet she is a beautiful soul, and notwithstanding the indications of incest (the father 'hunting' the children back into the house, the 'two children' in Eveline's care) Eveline considers it her duty to care for her father, the first Other whose desire she can fulfil: "he would miss her".[58]

While Eveline represents her father alternatingly as an ogre and an entertainer, he feeds her desire of desire, allowing her to live in her own world. One of the memories of him she cherishes especially is when "they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth [...] her father putting on her

pour ou contre certaines règles, travailler, sont des choses qui lui sont étrangères" (N. Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 209).

[50] J. Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[51] *Idem.*

[52] *Idem.*

[53] *Idem.*

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[57] Garry Leonard makes an interesting connection between the dust and Eveline's mother who "*is* dust" (Garry Leonard, "Wondering Where All the Dust Came From", p. 96). In this sense the link between Eveline-as-Cinderella and her mother is, in her psychic organisation, even stronger.

[58] J. Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

mother's bonnet to make the children laugh".[59] Two things are striking here: the fun she has when gender roles are mixed up, and her treatment of proper names. Her own surname is Hill, but instead of taking this as a mere signifier ascribed by the culture, she sees names as direct carriers of meaning which fit her imaginary world. She loves Frank whom she considers frank, Ernest who is too earnest to play, Arline from *The Bohemian Girl* who prefigures bohemian Eveline, Buenos Ayres where nice airs will entertain her. She likes to be "pleasantly confused" by her father when he reads her a "ghost story" or by Frank's tales of the "terrible Patagonians".[60] Frank also feeds her desire of pure desire taking her to the theatre, not to her usual cheap place but to "an unaccustomed" part of it.[61] So though Eveline's daydreams are fuelled with terrible tales —appealing to the masochistic listener— the "superabundance of her phantasy" cannot in the end rescue her: flooded by the mad utterances of her mother her undiluted libido gets the better of her and leaves her, in a recurrence of the mother's madness, in a paralysis. In a body, knotted in strife, abandoned to images of panic in which Frank alternatingly rescues and drowns her she seems to feel that "[a]ll the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her".[62]

Third, Eveline is particularly imprecise about her aims in life. Sharoni indicated that Frank never gets a surname and can only "think of a would-be husband's sexual desire".[63] That is certainly true, but Eveline's demands on (real) life are even more minimal: "First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him".[64] "He would give her life, perhaps love, too. […] she wanted to live".[65] So on the range of emotional links Eveline is very noncommittal: first she settles for excitement, then for sympathy, then "perhaps love"; but most important is that Frank's "tales [are] of distant countries";[66] because only "in a distant unknown country, […] she would be married —she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then".[67] As long as things are distant, they are fine. The same goes for her daily duties which remain at arm's

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[60] *Idem.*
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 31.
[62] J. Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 34. Even at this point the focaliser remains theatrical: not just "the sea", but "[a]ll the seas of the world […] would drown her". This tone of melodrama suggests that at this point Eveline can still fulfill the function of focaliser.
[63] J. Sharoni, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
[64] J. Joyce, *Dubliners*, p. 32.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 33
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

length. If something is in her hands she does not engage: she never enquired about details of the photo of her father's 'friend', which she dusts every week, because her focus is on the people who are not there: the people of her childhood who are dead now, or the brothers who have gone. No wonder then that her supervisor at the stores has to remind her "don't you see these ladies are waiting?" and that she should cast off her melancholy mood: "Look lively, Miss Hill, please".[68] Likewise, the dust does not disappear from the home as Eveline is more dreaming than dusting, deploring her life which is such "hard work".[69] Finally one might ask where Eveline feels her responsibilities lie. Not really with the two children in her care, who are only mentioned in passing. We never know whether they are her father's or her own; we never hear much about the sailors' lodging, "house on the main road where she used to visit".[70] In this sense Eveline corresponds perfectly to Braunstein's observation that pathological hysterics "do not fight for a cause, do not want a child, or engage seriously in work". We also do not see Eveline engaged in the practical aspects of her leaving with Frank: at no point is there any talk of the girl packing or hauling her luggage to the North Wall. If she thinks paradise is awaiting her, she does not even move towards it: "She set her white face to him, passive […]".[71]

Ryan's Eveline

Donal Ryan's work has not yet had the critical response it deserves, while his output since 2012 has been more than steady, and stunning. He is a powerful stylist and, like Joyce, he started off with a short story cycle which has already reached the status of a classic: *The Spinning Heart*. When Ryan rewrote Joyce's "Eveline" he changed many minor things. His protagonist is a boy, Evelyn, who has a strong attachment to his mother. This lady organises 'Welcome Nights' for refugees; one of whom, Hope, Evelyn falls in love with. Though there is no hope that the girl will be given immigrant status Evelyn secretly rents a cottage for the two of them in the Wild West of Ireland and they set off. Ryan's family differs from Joyce's in that they are middle class rather than working class, and the drunken father has morphed into an alcoholic mother. It is characteristic of Ryan's

[68] *Idem*.
[69] *Ibid*., p. 31.
[70] *Idem*.
[71] *Ibid*., p. 34.

transposition that his Evelyn is no Dubliner: the author set the action in his own town, Limerick, where most of his stories are set; so one of the Welcome Nights is organised in Athlunkard Street.[72] But, uncharacteristically, Ryan who writes so well about outsiders in Irish society does not concentrate on the problems of the migrant here at all;[73] the one element our contemporary picked up from Joyce and magnified is the strong, hysteric link which is passed on from the mother to child. Even while other matters are refracted, this is the backbone of the story.

Ryan's Mother Figure

While Joyce opens his story with the spotlight full on the adolescent Eveline, Donal Ryan starts with the mother figure. Evelyn himself only appears at the end of page two —a clear indication that we have moved from the individualism of modernism to the stress on the interactional which characterises postmodernism. Ryan's story shows us how transgenerational material is conveyed, not just verbally but in body language and gestures, tones and spatial positions. All together they constitute a portrait of Evelyn's theatrical, masochistic mother:

> What good is this? Mother asks nightly, and gestures about her. What good is any of it, with nobody to share it? Oh Augustine, she wails, my Augustine! And brandy slops from her bulbous glass onto her monstrous lap. A portrait of my father hangs apologetically above the living room fireplace; she sits at an angle from it in a hard high-backed chair and contorts her neck backwards and upwards to regard him censoriously. I nursed you through three illnesses, she says, and my reward is to be here, alone. My oil-on-canvas father avoids her eyes, preferring to gaze balefully at the crumbling cornice. She swings her eyes toward me and allows her pupils to dilate, as though to focus on me would be to acknowledge my existence, diluting her argument with my father's image.[74]

The mother is clearly histrionic as she "gestures about", "wails" and "swings" her eyes, even being so theatrical as to allow "her pupils to dilate". She is the victim of her own generous sacrifice, having nursed her

[72] Donal Ryan, "Eveline", p. 42.
[73] In *All We Shall Know* (2016) the reader gets a striking but sympathetic image of a traveller community, set in Ireland.
[74] D. Ryan, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

husband not through one but three illnesses. Yet she is ambiguous towards the portrait, not facing it frontally but "sitting at an angle", "contorting" her neck and treating him "censoriously". The bottom line is that she is the plaintive victim, betrayed and left behind. In this performance her son is merely a prop, a spectator. And like Joyce's Eveline, this mother hates the routine care for the house: the cornice is "crumbling".

Being more into aesthetics than into social reality the mother deals with images rather than people: she talks not to her son who is there in the flesh but to "[a] portrait of my father", "[m]y oil-on-canvas father", "my father's image". But also in her 'social circles' this narcissistic character has but one aim, to perform a queenly role. So she organizes a 'Welcome Night' for refugees but does not take the trouble of learning about their customs, so "[s]he unwittingly inverted people's names".[75] Again the guests are merely props for her ego: "People came, of various shades. She counted and catalogued and licked her lips, almost curtseying to the more regal Africans".[76] Their Otherness is not acknowledged: their convictions and religions are only frills to her tolerance, never an actual interest: "She asked whether they were Christian or … otherwise. What is otherwise? a man asked. Oh, you know, *Islamic* or some such, Mother replied. What is sumsuch? the man asked".[77] All they need to do is live up to her aesthetic expectations: "He sang a keening song of long, unwavering syllables at the end of that night and clapped and hooted wildly at our Irish dancers, and Mother declared herself his friend, and declared her night a victory".[78] Again, it is the mother who 'declares' what reality is: like the pathological hysteric she makes the world according to her image.[79] This is an image of generosity: for the first Welcome Night the ladies provide "a table of apple tarts *and* sandwiches *and* assorted cordials *and* Reeney tutted *and* sighed *and* pinked *and* reddened *and* instructed the surly serving staff to clear everything away":[80] that the ladies had forgotten to invite the refugees was but a detail of oversight. So while the food in the first Welcome Night was a sheer decorative affair, in the second Night it becomes a defence tool to cover up the inability to relate, so Evelyn's mother "poured tea and tepid coffee into mugs from giant flasks, and words into the embarrassed

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[76] *Idem.*
[77] *Idem.*
[78] *Idem.*
[79] For the difference between pathological, healthy and fundamental hysteria *vid.* H. Schwall, "Forms of Hysteria in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Stephen Hero*".
[80] D. Ryan, *op. cit.*, p. 42, my emphasis.

silence".[81] She is even so nervous that she is shaking and "a massive hand" has "to stop the terrible rattling of cup against saucer"[82] —the metonymy cutting out the rest of the guest's being which the hostess ignores.

Though Evelyn's mother is much more active than Joyce's Eveline, who is a mere spectator of performances, she also conforms to the cast of the Beauty and the Beast in her ambiguous relation with her husband. After having bewailed his absence she restyles him as a brute, an animal: when Evelyn says he wants to tour his father's photographic work she reshapes the image of her husband completely: "Ha! She said. Who would want to hear about that … *flim*flam! That … weasel's … *pornography*!".[83] This ambiguity also appears in the naming of their son. "I asked my mother once why she'd called me Evelyn. Waugh, she said. […] Waugh was a *man*, you know."[84] Again, the mother is contradictory in her wishes to wanting the son to be very male while 'programming' him with such a name. As Evelyn complains later it made him an easy target at school; and being pestered made him even more dependent on his parents and their ambiguous relation. Also, that Evelyn's family is not really well integrated in (the symbolic order of) the local culture may be gleaned from the fact that, unlike Eveline Hill, Ryan's family members do not even get a surname.

Like Joyce's protagonist, Evelyn's mother never articulates clear wishes, but instead maintains her suspended hunger for the sad role of the person who was deserted by her (deceased) husband. And like Eveline, she ignores the present to cast her (mind's) eye on some ever-shifting past and a vague future. When her son is with her she ignores him, when he wants to go she is devastated: "You go, she said, and leave me here, and you may stay gone, my fine boy. […] Please, Evelyn, I need you here. I almost believed her".[85] But she never takes any responsibility: when her son asks her why he was given this name she denies her own role in it: "it was your father's idea. […] She knew I knew the truth".[86] Like Eveline, Evelyn's mother is neither interested in children, nor in any kind of duty, nor any other people's rules and regulations. So when Evelyn tells his mother he is going on a tour for a while she uses the neologism, go and "*un*arrange it"[87] to indicate that even language, the lexicon, has to serve her private needs

[81] *Idem.*
[82] *Idem.*
[83] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[84] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[86] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[87] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

first. And like Eveline, at the end she 'offers' her white face to the world, in the form of a body crumpling under sadness and drink, to blackmail him into staying with her.

Evelyn

With a pathologically hysteric mother and no father to protect him from being smothered by her personality, Evelyn does not have much of a chance to carve out his own desire. When he meets Hope at one of the Welcome Nights arranged by his mother, his perception is framed by the maternal host: "There were *people* there, at least. Real live refugees. That was the first night I saw Hope".[88] Though Hope is 'alive and kicking', with a very realistic view on life, Evelyn will never engage with her Otherness. The reader never hears which country she originates from; all that is filtered out by Evelyn is that "[h]er legs stretched sweetly out from her, creamy-brown".[89] Until the very end, she will remain an image to him. When he leaves their cottage she "appeared […] My breath caught in my throat, the *shape* of her".[90] Maybe not quite Gabriel's vision of his wife Gretta as in *The Dead*, but projected all the same. Like Joyce's protagonist, Evelyn falls in love with the tale rather than with the one who tells it; and he loves Hope's story because he thinks it reflects and magnifies his own. He idolizes Hope as she embodies the dynamism he lacks:

> She travelled across England and Wales in a lorry driven by a silent man, lying on his narrow curtained bunk, and to Ireland across a stomach-churning sea, and to Dublin in the back of a white van with flowers painted on the side. When her trafficker slid the panel door back she kicked him in the testicles with all the force she could muster in her half-starved, dehydrated state […] I laughed and told her how as a teenager I considered my mother's naming of me to be an act of violence. My schoolmates needed no nickname for me, just a chanted elongation to keep time with their blows: E-ve-*line*, E-ve-*line*.[91]

Evelyn conveniently forgets that the violence in Hope's life was more than psychological, and her fight for survival of a different nature: He presents himself as one who suffered at the hands of his mother; he considers

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[89] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[90] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[91] *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

it his mother's responsibility that he gets no respect from his class mates. But his masochistic aspect becomes most obvious when he is "pleasantly confused" by the fact that Hope mixes feminine and masculine traits, and can answer inflicted violence with her own: "I sat rigid, priapic, praying that she wouldn't notice. Her legs stretched sweetly out from her […] viciously muscled. Her firm breasts strained the fabric of her light summer dress. I wondered how it would feel to be kicked in the balls by her."[92] The passage in Hope's story that strikes Evelyn most is her imitation of her trafficker's suffering:

> He sounded like a dog about to die of thirst, Hope said. Mweeeeh, mweeeeh, mweeeeh, she mimicked softly, and laughed, and looked in my eyes and through them and into the centre of me and I laughed with her. Work THAT off, she said to him […] I fell in love with her as she told me that story.[93]

Like the repetition of "Derevaun Sheraun" which "laid its spell on the very quick of her being",[94] it is the onomatopeic expressiveness of Hope's voice which will 'flood' him, so that he will repeatedly re-enact the passage. While he takes Hope to the cottage he rented on Ireland's west coast she tests his commitment, criticizing him at least three times: "What about your mother? I cannot love a man who will mistreat his mother".[95] She is also critical of his vehicle and accommodation:

> Hope didn't like the car I had hired. Why not a Mercedes? *Everyone* drives a Nissan. My mouth dried as I drove and no amount of water would moisten it. […] We stopped in Spiddal for petrol and food. […] She stood still before the cottage […] What is this? A *hut*. She turned and pierced me with her eyes and I felt my desert-dry mouth open and close again soundlessly.[96]

With every new piece of criticism Evelyn involuntarily identifies with the role of the traffickers, and his resolve falters. Like Eveline, the young man does not dare to acknowledge any clear-cut desire, nor does he admit to any other real emotion. When Hope asks him "[d]o you think I'm your slave?" he answers "[n]o, no, I whispered. I just love you. You don't have to

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[93] *Idem.*
[94] J. Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
[95] D. Ryan, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
[96] *Idem.*

do anything".[97] Later he adds "I'm sorry, I whispered. For what, she whispered back. I didn't know".[98] He even mirrors his mother as he cooks for 'his refugee' without managing real communication; in his defence mechanisms against his awkwardness, he even uses his mother's body language: "My cutlery rattled against my plate".[99] Because Evelyn has no clear ideal to fight for everything is provisional: "Hope thought I was rich. I let her think it".[100] He also knows that he cannot keep his promise: "What had I done, really, but fall stupidly into unrequited love and make a promise to save a woman from deportation that I couldn't possibly keep? My money would be gone inside six months".[101]

In the end, Evelyn will not only not fight for her cause, he will not even fight her criticism. Here, the young man's hysteria becomes self-destructive. While undecided, he thinks alternatingly of both parents: "I wondered if my father could see me, and what he would think of me now. If he would say Go home to your mother, you fool. Or, Well done, my son, now you're a man […] I […] thought of Mother and the duty I was leaving undone. To care for her into old age, to see her to the end of her path".[102] In their ambiguous relation Evelyn's parents cannot help him decide and so the knot between parents and child is not cut. Both Joyce's and Ryan's protagonists recall only positive aspects of their remaining parent, as in Eveline's "he would miss her",[103] and Evelyn's "Mother at her best, laughing, calling me Ev, her blue-eyed son".[104] These are not so much a self-reminder of their duty but a prop to avoid the final choice. So it seems that Evelyn will not stay with Hope. Having plucked her out of the refugee centre he leaves her in the middle of nowhere, in "a renovated cottage thatched with reeds and daub on the midway of a boreen that led to a tiny sheltered bay".[105] Yet his self-dramatizing faculties still work: "I set my face to the dark world outside, to the moaning wind. Evelyn, she cried behind me as I started the engine, Evie, please".[106]

And yet Ryan's end is less desperate than Joyce's. The psychotic intensity of Eveline's "silent fervent prayer" is toned down in Evelyn to "a

[97] *Idem.*
[98] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[99] *Ibid.*, p. 44-45.
[100] *Ibid.*, p. 45.
[101] *Idem.*
[102] *Idem.*
[103] J. Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
[104] D. Ryan, *op. cit.*, 45.
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 43.
[106] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

childish prayer".[107] This is the result of a series of factors in which both stories differ. First of all, Ryan's middle-class protagonist has more leeway than Eveline; the incestuous family relationship seemed of a merely psychological nature. Second, while Eveline's beloved Frank was at least as unreliable as she was, Hope seems a no-nonsense girl who knows the symbolic system all too well and has no illusions; in this sense at least she tried to correct Evelyn's dreamy idealism: "I told Hope I would support her application for asylum. She thanked me and told me there was no way to do so. She knew the system, it was almost the same in every European country: form-filling, refusal, appeal, refusal, deportation. Except here there is more *welcome* nights, yay!".[108]

Conclusion

"Eveline" was the first of Joyce's 'Dubliner stories' which dealt with 'adolescence', and it is typical of the naturalist's frame of mind to make his protagonist fail the test, set by the "period following the onset of puberty during which a young person develops from a child into an adult".[109] Ryan follows suit here. Though we know that Eveline is nineteen, Evelyn's age is never given. As his body language is "priapic" at some point, he is definitely able to engage in sexual relations, but he is still too entangled in his relationship with his mother. Like Eveline, Ryan's antihero conforms to the Beauty and the Beast-configuration: he hates his mother whose "bulbous glass" is slopping "onto her monstrous lap",[110] but is enthralled by her pride in her beautiful "blue-eyed son".[111] Both stories are "annals of frustration", more specifically frustration resulting from hysteric structures. Indeed both protagonists love the exotic, which is forbidden (as Joyce's father and Ryan's mother figure forbid the relationship); the pressure is raised until in both cases the mothers' influence engulfs the protagonists.

Yet the figure of Hope in Ryan's version introduces a no-fake news element in the story, and this brings us to the motif of migration, which remains in the background in both narratives. In Joyce's story the father angrily wishes the "'[d]amned Italians! Coming over here'" away.[112] That

[107] *Idem*.
[108] *Ibid*., p. 43.
[109] "Adolescence", *Lexico*.
[110] D. Ryan, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
[111] *Ibid*., p. 45.
[112] J. Joyce, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

this outburst of anger does not correspond to a historical truth is revealed by Terence Brown who indicates that around 1900 "Italian immigration to Ireland" was "in fact very slight".[113] Also the "terrible Patagonians" are interesting as another form of 'exciting exotism', of the ways in which popular (or populist) belief uses colonial and migration problems merely to feed a hunger for sensational stories. As Laura Reinares points out, Argentinean history books confirm that the Patagonians had long been wiped out by the time Frank travelled around the world. Their reputation for being terrible was a complete inversion of the truth, more reflecting on conquistadores like General Julio A. Roca who exterminated these indigenous people in 1879.[114] Yet while Joyce's criticism of his Dubliners' sensationalism remains marginal Ryan highlights both Evelyn's refusal and his mother's to engage with the Otherness of the refugees. The mother's Welcome Nights are purely cosmetic, a self-glorifying exercise, a show of exotism that is supposed to entertain the people who are bored in their homes. In showing not only a lack of genuine interest in the Other but also an incestuous desire to keep the nuclear family Ryan holds up a non-flattering image of the Irish middle-class family. But maybe the Limerick family's lack of interest in the Other is meant as a part *pro toto* for the rest of the country, and for the whole of Western Europe?

[113] T. Brown, "Notes", p. 255.
[114] Laura Barberan Reinares, "Like a 'Helpless Animal'? Like a Cautious Woman: Joyce's 'Eveline,' Immigration, and the Zwi Migdal in Argentina in the Early 1900s", p. 530.

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"Alight and burnt to the ground": Fire as a Metaphor of Rewriting in *Dubliners 100* and *Spill Simmer Falter Wither*

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Carolina Ulloa

Cocteau was asked if his home was on fire, what one thing would he save? The fire, he said, only the fire.
Nick Laird, "Property"

The twenty-first century has witnessed the birth of a multiplicity of literary voices that take advantage of the differences between the wide range of individualities that nurture the cultural arena, fuelled with a new political and social awareness. This has been key to unsettle the previously assumed practices on identity, which is no longer privileged as a stable and monolithic understanding, but as a set of characteristics that go beyond the narrow scope of one single feature and into a set of potential ones. In the current social context, traditions, related to collective identities, invite us to challenge them. Contemporary Irish voices have been prone to highlight the kindling nature of local narratives, which are the ones that provoke the aforementioned unsettling, and their possibility of divergence from the dominant discourse. Through their exploration of the very intimate experiences of their characters, Irish authors ponder the more pervasive and ontological conditions which encompass them as members of larger social constellations. Just as Declan Kiberd has pointed out, by

the end of the previous century and the beginning of this one, "the canon of Irish writing needed less to be supplanted than to be reinterpreted in ways which revealed more fully its cultural meanings".[1]

Towards the second half of the last century and more evidently in the new millennium, these meanings—particularly those in literature—are each time composed of a vaster layering of intra— and intertextual references, tiered at the same time with a wider sense of belonging to the global cultural exchanges. One of the ways to approach this accumulation of elements is through the practice of comparative literature, and more precisely, through what Claudio Guillén has termed "lo uno y lo diverso", the particular and the diverse. This scholar recognizes the challenge that critics face when delving into such a prolific manifestation of literary voices, which are at once specific and unable to escape their wider contexts, and proposes a diachronic structure in which both the particularities of the texts and their supranational affiliation meet in order to highlight their productive differences: "a set of relations that engage change with continuity, difference with analogy, particularity with generality".[2] From this perspective, in this article I analyse fire as a metaphor of rewriting, in its dual quality as a disruptive and reconstructing force, used with a parodic intent, in Patrick McCabe's "The Sisters," Peter Murphy's "The Dead," and Sara Baume's debut novel *Spill Simmer Falter Wither*. While the short stories that serve as hypotexts for the contemporary explorations written by McCabe and Murphy belong to the Irish context and the literary institution associated to the name of Joyce ("The Sisters" and "The Dead" in *Dubliners*), the novel by Baume resorts, among other sources, to travel literature from a specific tradition in the United States: the life narrative in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*. Baume adopts some aspects that build Gilbert's text and adapts them in her novel, using the Irish big house motif as one of her appropriation strategies. My analysis of Gilbert's narrative as a source behind the Irish novel aims at providing an unexplored field that is entrenched within Baume's proposed understanding of otherness.

My inquiry follows Guillén's diachronic structure and focuses on the use of parody in the aforementioned narratives, a concept that Linda Hutcheon has signalled as one of the most frequent genres used as a vehicle for the destabilization of previous practices—in this case, an individual's larger belonging to the national and literary traditions. Her understanding of

[1] Declan Kiberd, *The Irish Writer and the World*, p. 20.

[2] Claudio Guillén, *Entre lo uno y lo diverso. Introducción a la literatura comparada (ayer y hoy)*, p. 379, my translation.

it as a "repetition with difference" echoes the abovesaid set of particularity and diverseness in that it offers a new lens through which artists can filter their own creative confrontations.[3] Via parody, the Irish texts I have selected have recontextualized, synthetized, and reworked literary conventions. In the two stories selected from *Dubliners 100* and Baume's novel, fire is the constant metaphor that makes possible a comparative reading of the three works, as each of them depicts the burning of three significant spaces: a household, a library, and an Irish big house. Furthermore, this becomes a metaphor of the rewriting process, which, following Kiberd's idea, reinterprets and reveals a fuller assortment of cultural meanings. Moreover, my approach is associated with the deeply rooted connotations that space and self hold within the Irish tradition, since, as Claire Norris notes, "in Irish fiction place and space combine to create both a national and a personal identity".[4] Thus, these rewritings pose each of their three spaces to ponder on these two instances of identity formation.

Rewritings, defined by Matei Calinescu as "textual transformations: a certain playful, hide-and-seek type of indirection, a tongue-in-cheek seriousness, an often respectful and even honorific irony, and an overall tendency toward oblique and even secret or quasi-secret textual reference,"[5] are inherently hypertextual. As described by Gérard Genette, they are the result of a transformative relationship with previously written texts. More specifically for the purpose of this article, these texts can be deemed as parodies, which, according to Genette, and in echo with the obliqueness depicted in Calinescu, "is a game of skill"[6] and a "textual transformation with playful intent".[7] One important notion of this transformative game is what Abbé Sallier deems "the deflection of their subject and the subsequent change in meaning,"[8] which is what McCabe's "The Sisters," Murphy's "The Dead," and Sara Baume's *Spill* aim at. The complexities of the rewritings at hand deepen further when considering Hutcheon's insights on contemporary parody, which are based upon its dual quality of both honouring and establishing a critical distance.

Hutcheon defines parody as "a formal synthesis, an incorporation of the backgrounded text into itself" whose intent is to "mark the difference".[9] In

[3] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody. The Teachings of the Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, p. 32.
[4] Claire Norris, "The Big House: Space, Place, and Identity in Irish Fiction", p. 108.
[5] Matei Calinescu, "Rewriting," p. 243.
[6] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, p. 48.
[7] *Idem.*
[8] Abbé Sallier *apud ibid.*, p. 19.
[9] L. Hutcheon, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

the understanding of the literary Irish tradition to which I am referring, between the interstices left by this distance, there is a productive ground for what Kiberd has qualified as the modern notion of Ireland: “a quilt of many patches and colours, all beautiful, all distinct, yet all connected too”.[10] To add to this notion of difference, parody deals with the logic of the paradoxical. In its most basic aspect, it needs both the reader’s awareness of the text that is being parodied and a high degree of dependence on it. Hutcheon has called this an “encoding intent” in which if “the receiver does not recognize that the text is a parody, he or she will neutralize both its pragmatic ethos and its doubled structure”.[11] In this encoding intent, these contemporary Irish authors demonstrate how fertile their varied approaches to the literary tradition are, thus creating the productive multiplicity in which we are immersed. Now, linking this to a more specific notion of parody, the texts that I have chosen have the ethos of ridiculing their hypotexts, in a variety of degrees, to stress their own critical function.[12] Following the celebratory element of the differentiation carried within Kiberd’s metaphor of the quilt, this dependence can be seen as fruitful in terms of the destabilization produced by the criticism it conveys.

My reading of this criticism is articulated by the presence of fire and, in the case of the three texts in point, a parodic approach to its nature. I set the foundation of my analysis on this element as it has been understood and represented mainly in the West. Its ‘origin’ may be traced back to the Greek tradition, for it was Prometheus who gave fire to humans. This myth “became Europe’s own”,[13] considering the importance given to it in the different European contexts. Fire is a tool for development and, in general terms, it “certainly has both tremendous destructive power and a symbolically purifying effect”.[14] To contextualize this conception, Stephen J. Pyne argues that, first and foremost, it can be understood as a “technology of producing power” and a power of humanity,[15] which directly links it to the idea of creation and, therefore, of destruction. In the literary context, fire can be seen “as the ultimate dialectical tool, capable equally of deconstructing the text of the world into its constituent parts and fusing them into a new synthesis.”[16] In this sense, fire embodies the capacity to produce, as well

[10] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, p. 653.
[11] L. Hutcheon, *op.cit.*, p. 27.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[13] Stephen J. Pyne, “Fire in the Mind: Changing Understandings of Fire in Western Civilization,” p. 1.
[14] Gemma Clark, “The Campaign of Fire. Arson during the Irish Civil War,” p. 56.
[15] S. Pyne, *op. cit.* p. 1.
[16] *Idem.*

as that to eradicate, which is then the ground for renewal or rebirth. This echoes parody's own stratagems and its double structure, for its criticism entails the ability to potentially destroy—depending on the degree to which the criticism aims and on how ferocious or subversive the intent of each specific case is–and to create from the ashes of this latent destruction. Northrop Frye, in his preface to Gaston Bachelard's *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, discusses this power:

> The arts […] begin constructing power, generally called imagination, and embody it in forms with a clarity of communication that makes them object of perception to others. The units of this constructing power are analogy and identity, which appear in literature as the figures of simile and metaphor. To the imagination, fire is not separable datum experience: it is already linked by analogy with a dozen aspects of experience.[17]

For this reason, and considering that Bachelard's approach to fire aims to discover the "system of heterogeneous values" that lies underneath the Western conceptions of fire,[18] it is possible to make of fire a metaphor for rewriting in parodic terms.

If parody is a tool to confront paradigms and it does so in a paradoxical fashion, it follows that fire shares these qualities. Fire "can contradict itself,"[19] as Bachelard notes. In his search for what he calls the underlying "complexes" of the Western assumptions related to this element, which Frye explains as literary myths, the French author discusses its contradictory and dual nature in relation to the unconscious, that is the "convictions about fire",[20] which demand a self-generating thirst for knowledge, a reverie, and a fear. Moreover, given that fire is "essential to any process of change",[21] Bachelard poses it as a desire,[22] which in turn implies a continuous source of renewal. What is more interesting in this philosopher's argumentation is his position, which echoes the very purpose of parody: "to laugh at oneself", to disrupt his convictions through a "self-critical irony" in order to transform what had previously seemed natural to fire.[23] As Genette confirms, "parody inevitably connotes satire and irony".[24]

[17] Northrop Frye, "Preface", p. vi.
[18] Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, p. 6.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[21] S. Pyne, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[22] G. Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 6
[24] G. Genette, *op. cit.*, p. 24

Rewriting Dubliners *in* Dubliners 100

Delving into the analysis of the literary texts I propose, fire is a kindling element for the rewriting process given through the "recontextualization" of their hypotexts.[25] Out of the 15 short stories in both the hypotext and the hypertext, I selected the opening and the closing ones because they round up the cohesion of these works as a whole. Whereas in *Dubliners* the unity is found, mainly, in the element of paralysis, in *Dubliners 100* the unity is evident in its use of fire as a disruptive and reconstructing element. As the editor of the collection, Thomas Morris gathered 15 contemporary and awarded Irish authors for each to make a "cover" of one of the short stories contained in Joyce's collection as a comment on the weight of its tradition and a stance toward the acknowledgement of multiplicities.[26] The short stories are inspired by the ones contained in *Dubliners*, but the connection can be as loose or as tight as each author decides; the instruction was simply "to tell the story again, but in your own voice".[27] The result is prolific in that it sets the importance of the individual and the collective on the same level because each writer managed to propose a new view on whatever themes s/he chose to write in the context in which s/he is living while attempting to reconcile his or her voice with that of one of the most canonical Irish authors. In McCabe's "The Sisters," the author destabilizes the protagonist's notion of community and, in a greater sense, his idea of nation. The case of Murphy's "The Dead" presents different layers in its use of fire for its final confrontation with the Irish literary tradition.

Dubliners has been widely analysed as a commentary on the paralysis of the Irish society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Joyce himself stated his purpose: "'to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because the city seemed to me the centre of paralysis'".[28] A recent study by Vicki Mahaffey and Jill Shashaty argues that its aim "is to show ordinary citizens exactly where and how hope founders, and beyond that to instigate political and social change".[29] The most important evidence of this instigation is found in both "The Sisters" and "The Dead," but particularly in the latter: the anticlimactic moment when the heterodiegetic narrator, focalised on the protagonist, Gabriel

[25] M. Calinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 247.
[26] Thomas Morris (ed.), *Dubliners 100*, p. viii.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. ix.
[28] James Joyce *apud* Gerhard Friedrich, "The Gnomonic Clue to James Joyce's Dubliners", p. 421.
[29] Vicki Mahaffey and Jill Shashaty *apud* Elizabeth Mannion, "Collaborative Dubliners: Joyce in Dialogue, a Range of Framing Interpretations", p. 188.

Conroy, asserts how "the snow is general all over Ireland".[30] Snow is symbolic of the paralysis that has Ireland submerged in a lack of development and fertility, numbing the citizens with its totalizing cold. Just as in the case of *Dubliners*, the rewriting edited by Morris evidences different types of commentaries on both the hypotext and what is understood as Ireland today. These factors point towards the importance of themes that were not directly addressed in Joyce's version of Dublin but are being criticized in the present century. Snow, as noted from the opening short story, turns into the fire that puts these diegetic realities in confrontation with a more current Irish context.

On the one hand, "The Sisters," by Joyce, tells the story of how an unnamed young narrator faces the death of Father Flynn, a disturbingly close friend of his whom he considered his mentor. This is the story in which the notion of paralysis is introduced. Flynn, who taught the protagonist about some of the conflicting notions of the Catholic religion, died after an accident left him without the capacity to move. The protagonist's final thoughts are related to the futility of religious inclinations and the suggestion of the weight of what is left unsaid. In Joyce's "The Sisters", set around Christmas time, the most relevant element in connection to fire is the candles that are lit during Father Flynn's wake.

While Joyce's "The Sisters" does not grant much importance to the elements related to fire, McCabe's uses these allusions as an inspiration for his own version of the story. During Christmas, there is a chimney fire at the McCooey's quarters. All the neighbours leave their homes to witness the latent destruction of the place. Whereas in Joyce's opening short story the narrator is heterodiegetic and the focalization is mostly on the unnamed protagonist, McCabe's "The Sisters" is recounted by an autodiegetic narrator called Desmond McCooey who, in the present of the diegesis, is waiting for the fire squad. In both cases, the two youngsters are in the process of learning something about themselves with the help of a mentor figure to guide them. In McCabe's text, this boy is very responsible and mature. He had recently won a prize for an essay on his idea of *heimat*, the notion that will be destabilized by the end of the story. While in Joyce's narrative the mentor is Flynn, in McCabe's the mentor is another young boy, older than him, named Douglas Greenan and self-renamed Virgil Tracy, who does not seem invested in teaching him. Regardless,

[30] James Joyce, *Dubliners*, p. 403.

Desmond considers him the centre of his stability in the midst of his apartment being burned down.

The story shows the wait for the arrival of the firefighters, who are not in time since this is a special holiday for the Catholic tradition that is integrated in the whole of the society. This is a disturbing gathering since everyone is 'celebrating' Christmas in the anguish of the fire spreading without any conscious effort to quench it. The neighbours are reminiscing about their pasts as they complain of the recklessness that led to the accident, which might in turn affect them. When a neighbour praised Dessie, he triggered his reflections on the concept of *heimat*, unknown to him until he was invited to participate in the contest "Our Community and What it Means to Me", [31] which he won. Desmond does not go deep into what he wrote, but he explains that "in a sense [*heimat*] means home, a castle in a person's heart".[32] He bases the argument of his essay on one happy event during a past Christmas, "a night where there had been no chimney fires".[33] Nevertheless, the current incident leads him to question what community means and whether he conveyed it with the eloquence that the headmaster had praised him for.

The notion of community is confronted by the situation depicted in this plot: there is no union, no support, and no action that could either comfort the McCooeys or stop the chaos. The term *heimat*, the idea of home or community which is demonstrated in this instance, does not support or reinforce the idea of supportive and unconditional nationalism of its German origin. The destruction of the apartment potentially meant the wrecking of Desmond's and his parents' heart-castle, which can be another form of belonging to the greater sense of one's own country. In the beginning of the twentieth century, which is the time in which Joyce's short story takes place, the notion of Irish national identity was being developed: "This monocultural construct found its roots in the nation-building project of nineteenth-century Ireland, and was largely dependent on a 'falsely homogenising Irish culture and [on] excising cultural forms deemed to be Other".[34] More specifically, this construct depended on the tension between two main groups: the Catholic, historically associated with the Irish-speaking population, grouped together by the mother-tongue (even if not predominant) and its rural roots, and the Protestant and English-speaking, deliberate

[31] Patrick McCabe, "The Sisters," p. 5.
[32] *Idem.*
[33] *Idem.*
[34] Carmen Zamorano Llena, "'Our Identity is Our Own Instability': Intercultural Exchanges and the Redefinition of Identity in Hugo Hamilton's *Disguise* and *Hand in the Fire*," p. 109.

crown-subjects, who fiercely held on to the land power. Notwithstanding the succinctness of this description, it is possible to conclude that this conception no longer fits in the contemporary context in which McCabe's "The Sisters" is set. The protagonist reflects on this enforced notion of home, whereas in Joyce's text the characters do not fathom to confront it.

In the case of McCabe's rewriting, nation does not necessarily imply home, just as it does not imply neither unity nor support. The core of the protagonist's home is being consumed by a fire that started in what can be considered the heart of the apartment: the fireplace, which is regarded by Bachelard as "no doubt, for man the first object of reverie, the symbol of repose".[35] As the story progresses Desmond's certainties begin to crumble as well. The more he attempts to reach out for his mentor figure, the more desolated he is left by his oblivion. The most significant recollection is of his last Christmas present: "a little scarlet-jacketed dragoon made of tin, complete with bayoneted rifle and tall shiny bearskin hat".[36] When this loss occurred, Douglas, the mentor-figure, was the one person in Dessie's life in whom he could find solace,[37] whereas in the present he cannot.

The suggestions of Christmas, associated with a traditional construction of a home, narrow the focus of the massive impact it has on the McCooey quarters. There is a long list of suggestions, provided by the neighbours, on what would have happened if they had not woken up to witness the ongoing destruction; it again closes up in the violent imagery of a "fist made of smoke" choking the whole community.[38] This is one possible form of paralysis that could have stopped the coexistence of all the people in the quarters. However, McCabe does not allow this, even if he includes the presence of Terence Bly, a reporter, to freeze the moment in one picture. The fire, in the end, extinguishes on its own; by the time the fire squad arrives, their help is no longer needed, evidencing the futility of the wait. With the mockery of the men who were gathered around this accident, Desmond finally reflects on the following:

> As an image lifted noiselessly in the charred weighted air I thought again of the little match girl and the smoke from her quenched tinders greedily consumed by the universe's maw, abandoning in its wake the tiniest of qua-

[35] G. Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
[36] P. McCabe, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
[37] Desmond's toy signals two literary references: "The Little Tin Soldier" and "The Little Match Girl" (*Vid.* P. McCabe, "The Sisters," p. 10). They both hint at the destruction by fire that will take place in this short story. Moreover, even if the community does not reflect on the events in this diegesis, they seem to share a common appreciation and nostalgia for them which unites them superficially.
[38] P. McCabe, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

> vering, sunset-coloured glows —which from that vertiginous absence might have been anything— the jacket of a discarded toy dragoon, perhaps, or even a marble. Or, though I bitterly joined battle with such a possibility, the dimming embers of a diminished fastness, the once unbreachable ramparts of home.[39]

The massive destructive fire that threatened the community ends in an anticlimactic moment that detonates the protagonist's epiphany, a new construction of *heimat*. The adjectives ("charred", "consumed", and "diminished") and the nouns ("smoke", "glows", "battle", "embers", and "ramparts") are reminiscent of what the fire ignited and are linked to Desmond's childhood experiences. It is not a hopeful revelation; regardless, it is still a new version that opens up the possibility of maturity based on the light that was shed by what is left of his innermost circle. This, then, proves the metaphorical usage of fire: the McCooey home is disrupted by it, even if it does not completely destroy it, in order to point out the renewal of what the protagonist had thought as his community. The final reflection hints at his own rewriting of what he had previously understood by it.

As Bachelard's states, destruction, more than change, "is a renewal".[40] Whereas McCabe's manipulation of fire is straightforwardly addressed to the sense of collective identity, Murphy utilizes a series of games through which he asserts a dislocation of the national literary tradition, which is directly grounded on the destruction of Joyce's *Dubliners*. "The Dead" is the short story in which the paralysis that was signalled in the opening text of the collection comes to a rounded-up conclusion. In this text, the fire elements mentioned are related to Gretta. The most important allusion is the one associated with the foundation of the Conroy marriage and its passions. Moreover, it is related to the naming of the character whose existence led Gabriel to question his place in his marriage, primarily, but also in his community and country: Michael Furey. The protagonist's name alludes to the archangel related to fire in the Judeo-Christian tradition. However, following Bachelard's dissertation on this element, fire should be what triggers passion and desire in human beings—and Joyce's Gabriel realizes that he had never excited anything similar in Gretta to what Michael Furey had. Even as fire reawakens Gabriel's own desire, in his own association to the Archangel Gabriel and in his descriptions of

[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
[40] G. Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

Gretta "with words like flame, bronze, and fire",[41] my focus is still on his impossibility to move toward it.

Murphy's "The Dead" depicts the events occurring in a day in the life of an unnamed narrator who is a social outcast in the midst of a war. The different levels in which fire as a means of confrontation are presented associate to culture, national identity, the permeating male perspective in a patriarchal context, and literature itself. This short story is more evidently connected to the ridiculing aspect of parody that Hutcheon signals, voiced through an autodiegetic narrator.[42] "The Dead" is set somewhere near the fictional Isle of Hell where the protagonist had been imprisoned. The narrator attempts to interact with other characters in order to get his basic needs fulfilled, with no success. Since he is a fugitive, he ends up finding a place of refuge alongside six others who were living on the streets,[43] gathered around a bonfire: "Twas after midnight I suspect afore I cem upon a settlement name Bargytown-On-Sea. […] I spied a stalk of flame a-flickern in the darkness on the harber side of town".[44] In this gathering he discovers that the local library had been "alight and burnt to the ground" as a consequence of the militia's presence in the place.[45]

The Morkan's gathering from Joyce's story is parodied with the introduction of this bonfire. To begin with, Murphy's protagonist is not 'cultured' as Gabriel Conroy is, denoted in the spelling and grammatical structures he uses. All the people gathered seem to lack a home, which is key to unsettle the tone with which the Christmas dinner was glorified in Joyce. In this narrative, the atmosphere is not one of celebration, but one of mystery: by the time the protagonist finds the group, it is already past the hour associated to the blurring of boundaries between the natural and the supernatural. The story they talk about is included in the only book left from the burning of the library, *Dubliners* by Joyce, namely "The Dead," "a tale that told of a party on the feast of the epiphany many years ago".[46] While in this diegesis the narrator is focusing on the actual food of the feast, which is what he is missing in his present and not the luxury depicted in

[41] Noelle Dickerson, "Annunciation, Crucifixion, Resurrection: Christian Symbolism in Joyce's 'The Dead'", p. 12.
[42] This already establishes a contrast with Joyce's choice of narrative voice, a heterodiegetic one, which, even if it can be viewed from Bakhtin's perspective of the dialogic nature of the narrative genre, still focuses on Gabriel's point of view.
[43] The number six is enlightening when related to the Judeo-Christian tradition since it is connected to a seraph, "the burning one".
[44] Peter Murphy, "The Dead", p. 211.
[45] *Idem.*
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

the Morkan household, the only provisions the characters share is a "can of brew".[47] Murphy hints at a twist of the events, for this beverage signals what Bachelard has pointed out in relation to fire: "phantasmagorical literature is dependent upon the poetic excitation of alcohol".[48]

Even if there is no elegance in this gathering, there is still a presence of the magnificent and the allegedly erudite in this fiction, as already introduced with the protagonist's opposition to Joyce's Gabriel. Murphy presents the metaphor of books as a source of knowledge: "Milisha men knows well a library is the root of all insurgency. Iffen ye burn a people's books ye burn their memory, iffen ye burn their memory ye burn their history".[49] The attempt of the dominant discourse to subsume the one which counters it—the "Fat Bastards"[50] vs. the insurgents—is visible in this explanation and is connected to what can be assumed as national identity. Murphy furthers this metaphor by presenting a simile, which generalizes this idea of nationality and presents one of individuality at the same time by posing the library as a human body and the damage that the fire brought to it: "the noise the fire generated was like a thousand breaking bones".[51] In the argumentation offered, history constitutes the basis of a nation just as bones provide the structure of a body, linking literature with the notion of survival, which is reinforced by the narrator's urge for food. The link between one and the other is a conflicting one because it is presented in the two extremes at the same time: the library is the place where one could find the intellectual kind of sustenance, but it is a literal shelter for existence as well. To round this up, the author adds the transtextual element of allusion—summarizing Joyce's "The Dead" through the perspective of his protagonist—and keeps on advancing a comical and sinister tension between the essentially erudite and the very mundane.

Following this tension, after the list of plates that were served at the "epiphany dinner," there is a disrupting voice in the crowd: Crazy Mary. Everyone else but her, who is the only female character in the diegesis, discredits the magnanimity of the story and grounds her disagreement on its ordinary anecdote. In relation to Joyce's narrator, there is an important distance established, first, by means of its syntax:

[47] P. Murphy, *op.cit.*, p. 212.
[48] G. Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[49] P. Murphy, *op.cit.*, p. 212.
[50] *Idem.*
[51] *Idem.*

> It told of a lass named Gretta Conroy stood in shadow with her ear cocked to a sad ole song, 'The Lass of Aughrim', while her husband Gabriel romanced about the snow that gathered like a shawl upon her shoulders, but soon enough his randiness was doused by her remembrance of a traveller lad named Michael Furey…[52]

In this summary of Joyce's story, Gretta is not subordinated to Gabriel, as observable in the order of their introductions and the possessive pronoun that precedes the noun "husband". The snow, in second place, is a decorative element around her—not the paralysis to which it is associated in the hypotext. In a third instance, the narrator is bringing to the fore this marriage's relationship, since it is what triggers Gabriel's lament by the end of Joyce's "The Dead" and the passion in Gretta. Crazy Mary confronts the attendees with the following: "Did they not agree that the fella in the book was an awful class of gom, cuckolded by a corpse? *Generous tears*".[53] She is ridiculing and minimizing Gabriel's reaction because, according to her, he is mourning the loss of the idealization he had made of Gretta, his "*virgin worship*".[54]

This distance from the male perspective used by Joyce to characterise Gretta anchors Murphy's criticism and defines his approach to the Joycean story. Doc reprimands Crazy Mary with an authoritative statement: "iffen ye go looking for the stuff of human virtue in a work of art ye will be sorely let-down every time. […] ye must read the story with yer heart and not yer mind".[55] This dialogue, which could have been eloquent and decisive, ends up being mocked by the female character, who being confronted by another male perspective on the matter, only retorts "[h]eart me arse and cabbage".[56] Afterwards she tosses the "half-burnt book" into the fire,[57] thus culminating its material destruction and, consequently, the one initiated by her discourse. In relation to Joyce's "The Dead," it is arguable that the readings that had been given to it are no longer pertinent for both the diegesis and the contemporary extratextual context. In the introduction to this article I mentioned that the current cultural arena is fuelled by new political and social awareness; such awareness is exemplified here by means of the direct voicing of the female character, who distances herself from the stereotypical femininity constructed in Gretta by means of Gabri-

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 213.
[53] *Idem.*
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 214.
[55] *Idem.*
[56] *Idem.*
[57] *Idem.*

el's male gaze. Now that what was left of the book has finally disappeared —therefore their memory and history—the crowd gathered around the bonfire, save for the protagonist, is gone too. A final turn of the screw in this story comes with the realization that these characters had been dead all along, turning Joyce's metaphor into a literal conception of what the title alludes to.

These rewritings allow us to picture the ambiguity of several notions that were considered stable and generalized in Joyce's narratives, mainly national identity as paralysis and literary tradition from the standpoint of the Irish canon. To begin with, both short stories have already moved from what was supposed to be the centre of the collection: Dublin. The spaces in which the two new stories develop are being consumed by fire. In the case of McCabe's "The Sisters," the chimney fire in the McCooey quarters, which threatened the lives of the people from the community, implies a destabilization on the notion of *heimat*, which is depicted in Joyce's hypotext first by means of a communal mourning and, secondly, by the acceptance of a Catholic ruling by keeping Father Flynn's 'problem' unsaid and undiscussed. Murphy's "The Dead" is set in the midst of a war in which the presence of fire is visible in the setting —the Isle of Hell— as well as in the weaponry and the bonfire providing warmth to the homeless characters, which in turn becomes the literal source of the destruction of Joyce's *Dubliners*. In the particular context of this diegesis, apart from destabilizing the most common interpretation of "The Dead," which assumed Gabriel Conroy as its centre, there is also another level that may be considered: one in which the tradition set by Joyce is transformed into a continuously changing one, while paradoxically evoking it. This is moreover enhanced by the allusion to alcohol and its repercussions on the feast of the epiphany, which highlight Gabriel's counterpart Freddy Mallins–an articulated character, despite his excesses, who is rejected by conveying his controversial opinions–and Mr. Browne, whose increasingly inappropriate behaviour points to the possible superficiality of his own Protestant doctrine, rather than the protagonist himself.

In reference to the 2014 collection in its totality, what I find most revealing of the burning of *Dubliners* is the honouring quality of it. The notions of community presented in Joyce's collection, which already depicted the author's discomfort with what he assumed as a homogenizing paralysis, become a local sense of lack of unity in McCabe's "The Sisters," which is uttered by a young protagonist who realizes and elaborates on his awareness of it and possibly moves forward a new position that takes into account the strains he perceived. There is a willingness in Desmond that

was not suggested in Joyce's short story. The unsaid tension underlying the paralysis is further discussed as *Dubliners 100* progresses, reaching its climax in Murphy's "The Dead," in which the war-situated plot already fractures what in Joyce's text was conceived as a whole—however conflicting it could be. Moreover, this short story's autodiegetic narrator voices a minority, one of the rebels against the dominant group, through which the Irish literary tradition and its implications on the construction of a canon are signalled and appropriated. Thus, Irish local narratives point to a heterogeneous quality that does not conform to one single perspective and they welcome the ambiguous, inconclusive, and variable beginning, which is the possibility of departing from previous discourses, critically marking their differences.

Rewriting Traditions in Spill Simmer Falter Wither

In order to discuss one of the hyptotexts related to Baume's *Spill*, I will focus simultaneously on one of the most significant subgenres of Irish fiction, namely the big house novel and, even more precisely, its burning.[58] At the same time, I will recur to the already mentioned *Eat* by Gilbert and its conception of fire. It is possible to do so by reiterating Guillén's practice, since it allows me to link Baume's novel and this particular hypotext in a supranational fashion that hints at the connectedness between the two: "Between the nation and the world, between particular cultures and an emanating single culture".[59] My approach occurs in light of the parodical hypertextual relation, which is established, as in the case of my analysis in the previous section, by means of fire as a metaphor of rewriting. The fire depicted in Gilbert as a spiritual desire founded upon a lack of integration of the otherness throughout her journey becomes Baume's motor to create an alienated character who wishes to reject the discourse that has been imposed on him through the burning of his father's household. My foremost aim is, thus, to offer a more comprehensive way in which an author may unsettle her own tradition by resourcing to a different one. This can, in turn, broaden our perspective of the spectrum in which Irish

[58] This means that there are other uses of fire in this novel, but I will not focus on them for the purposes of this chapter.
[59] C. Guillén, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

contemporary authors have chosen to celebrate the multiplicity that the current literary century has to offer.

I am aware of the interpretative risk I am taking when posing Gilbert's *Eat* as one of Baume's hypotexts. Before moving forward in my analysis, I acknowledge that Baume pays homage to Beckett, another crucial figure in the Irish literary canon. There are at least four ways in which this relation is observable. To begin with, *Spill* has a "Becketty title [which] is a worry, because it begs to be misremembered" and a "misanthropic recluse" as the protagonist.[60] Secondly, it presents a plot that might as well fall into the category of the absurd—given that two outcasts of different species depart on a journey that is deemed futile from the very beginning. Thirdly, the narrative privileges perception and description over actions, just as it occurs in some of Beckett's best-known prose, such as *Stories and Texts for Nothing*, in which the grotesque plays a vital role for the characterisation of the protagonist(s), as it occurs with the father of Baume's misanthrope. Lastly, one of the main preoccupations that the novel shows is with language as a viable vehicle for meaning; first by voicing the experiences of the dog in the opening and closing chapters, and then by creating a main character whose perfect articulation does not imply making sense of what he experiences. These elements are also pertinent for my approach in this chapter, but the connection between them is centred in the intersection of travel literature and life narratives in Baume's and Gilbert's relation.

Baume's novel was published in 2015, after she was already positioned in the literary circles with the 2014 Davy Byrnes Short Story Award for her story "Solesearcher1". In comparison, Gilbert's memoir reached international acclaim since the year it was launched and continues to do so.[61] Both share travel as the trigger for their plot, which marks an aim in both protagonists to "cross the border to see what is on the other side, compare the interior with the exterior".[62] Travel literature portrays "an encounter with the 'other' and the 'place other'".[63] Through this encounter it is possible to elucidate "the supremacy of dominant cultures and the mechanisms

[60] Joseph, O'Connor, "*Spill Simmer Falter Wither*, by Sara Baume: Greatness Already Evident", par. 11, par. 3.
[61] Let us note that the arena in which the texts are reproduced and distributed is not the same, which makes it important to differentiate from Baume's literary recognition and Gilbert's popularity. Plus, the latter is widely circulated in the global market, thus advancing and perpetrating its status as a best-seller. For instance, *Eat* was announced in the *New York Times* Best-Seller List and adapted into a film starring Julia Roberts.
[62] Domenico Nucera. "Los viajes y la literatura," in *Introducción a la literatura comparada*, p. 243. Unless stated otherwistated, every translation from this author is mine.
[63] *Idem*.

of affirmation and reproduction of ideologies".[64] Its three main components are "to depart, to travel, to return";[65] and this coming back is a "re-birth under a different form, given the experience of the 'place other' and the encounter with the 'other'":[66] a discovery in accordance to what the metaphor of fire as rewriting proposes. Despite the similarities, the first critical distancing that *Spill* establishes with its hypotext is the opposition to its dominant narrative: the female character in *Eat* (whose name is Elizabeth Gilbert) does not position herself within otherness, whereas the narrator in *Spill* speaks from his condition as the other.

The former comparison is possible given the autodiegetic quality that both texts share, which I explore through the theory of life narratives. Taking Philippe Lejeune's "autobiography" as a starting point,[67] but delving into further nuances, Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson offer the term "life narrative" to elaborate on their theory on "self-referential writing[s]".[68] According to their own study on autobiography, it is a "term for a particular practice of life narrative that emerged in the Enlightenment and has become canonical in the West" as a "master narrative of the sovereign self".[69] They expound, too, on how these narratives "address readers whom they want to persuade of their vision of experience,"[70] which already implies a manipulation of the content provided in order to suit a target audience. As a self-expressive act, *Eat* is the effect of "the action of public discourses, among them the culturally pervasive discourses of identity that inform historically-specific modes, contexts, and receptions of the autobiographical writing".[71] While Gilbert's narrator assumes the position of one in search of a spiritual journey, she is denoting a specific belonging to a class, a gender, and a nationality which are built upon specific privileges in which Baume's protagonist cannot take part.

With this in mind, even when "the autobiographical subject is amnesiac, incoherent, heterogeneous, interactive,"[72] it is possible to place Gilbert's

[64] *Idem*.
[65] *Ibid*., p. 247.
[66] *Ibid*., p. 249.
[67] This term is defined as "the retrospective record in prose that a real person gives of his or her own being, emphasizing the personal life and in particular his or her story of life" (*Vid*. Philippe Lejeune, "El pacto autobiográfico", p. 48, my translation).
[68] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography. A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, p. 3.
[69] *Idem*.
[70] *Ibid*., p. 4.
[71] Sidonie Smith, "Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance," in *Resistance, a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, p.17.
[72] *Ibid*., p. 20.

text as a set of reiterations within dominant discourses in her context. The readers learn about Gilbert herself through the illusion of an "unfiltered" autodiegetic narrator permeated by what Foucault has called "discursive regimes".[73] As Deborah Philips asserts, the "systems, which frame and order her experience, are never acknowledged,"[74] thus adding to its illusion of universality. At the time in which it takes place, Gilbert, already a writer, was undergoing a hurtful divorce and made a deal with her agent in order to document her experiences while in Italy, India, and Indonesia, where she was aiming to understand pleasure, spirituality, and balance, respectively. Gilbert states that she was facing depression and the insecurity that comes with loneliness—the triggers of her departure. In the preface she calls her work a "spiritual pilgrimage" and assumes the title as her mantra,[75] so each time she finishes one of her 108 chapters, a structure based on a *japa mala*,[76] she rounds it up by repeating it. The result is the propagation of the female public's attempt to become 'better,' even if this was not the purpose when exposing such vulnerability. Without attempting to diminish her experience, I do want to retake what Joshunda Sanders and Diane Barnes-Brown state about the type of discourses such as the one Gilbert proposes in her life narrative, which they deem as "literature or media whose expressed goal is one of spiritual, existential, or philosophical enlightenment contingent upon women's hard work, commitment, and patience, but whose actual barriers to entry are primarily financial".[77] The 'new' version of Gilbert's self does not entirely fulfil the indispensable objective of travel literature, which is to return as a different person.

Baume's novel, in accordance to travel literature, utilizes Gilbert's self-discovery through a physical journey in order to create an insightful, yet disturbing, plot. The indication that this is so comes from the symbolic implication of the journey, in which driving, the main action, is interweaved with the protagonist's awareness of "the day I became a person",[78] the day he, already middle-aged, obtained his driver's license to take his now deceased father to different places. *Eat* depicts a sense of "spirituality and therapy [that] become as much a matter of consumer choice as any oth-

[73] S. Smith and J. Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

[74] Deborah Philips, "Shopping for Meaning: The Spiritual Quest," in *Women's Fiction: From 1945 to Today*, p. 175.

[75] Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*, p. 15.

[76] A garland made of beads used in spiritual practices such as Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism.

[77] Joshunda Sanders and Diana Barnes-Brown, "Eat, Pray, Spend. Priv-Lit and the New, Enlightened American Dream", par. 5.

[78] Sara Baume, *Spill, Simmer, Falter, Wither*, p. 137.

er commodity,"[79] whereas *Spill* tells the story of this 57-year-old man with physical and mental challenges who adopts a one-eyed dog with whom he travels through the coast of the unnamed County Cork as they run from the guards of the pound, who are trying to trap the canine after a violent incident. The title of Baume's work, besides alluding to the round of seasons, directs the reader's thoughts to actions that imply decay. Apart from this, it follows Genette's conception of "minimal parody", which consists of "taking up a familiar text literally and giving it a new meaning, while playing, if possible and as needed, on the words".[80] This is depicted in the mocking mantra of the title of the novel—"Spill Simmer Falter Wither"—through that additional fourth verb that opposes the idea of prosperity. Other 'mantras' are found in the continuous repetition of phrases in *Spill*, but these are not related to a spiritual attempt to assert emotions: they are character-traits of a misanthropic and obsessive protagonist. For instance, once the journey begins, the autodiegetic narrator cannot stop alluding to the action taking place: "We are driving, driving, driving".[81] Every one of the repeated actions conveys a sense of urgency and escape, not a consolatory and mindful instance of self-reflection.

Every segment in *Spill* recounts the protagonist's present and past experiences that led him to leave his house, as Gilbert did. There is an evolution in the relationship between the protagonist and One Eye, the dog he rescued. The reason for this adoption is the ever-present loneliness after his father's death, and his choosing of one companion that is missing a part of his body suggests a reflection of his own self. Just as his animal companion, the protagonist lacks something, especially a sense of connection to his environment due to his condition as a "special" and "not right-minded" person,[82] which makes him an outcast who cannot access the sphere of the dominant discourses. After One Eye attacks another dog on the beach, the protagonist's social circle segregates him further. As a result, readers get "Wither", the part in which both One Eye and his anxious owner start a life in his car while travelling along the Irish coast. The household that had been his father's is left behind and the dilapidated car becomes the protagonist's and One Eye's moving and flickering source for survival, with the only comfort of having each other as company, enduring the perils by using a "camping cooker" for food and warmth.[83]

[79] Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff *apud* D. Philips, *op. cit.*, p. 172.
[80] G. Genette, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[81] S. Baume, *op. cit.*, p. 133, p. 134, p. 135, p. 136.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 238.
[83] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

In "Wither" the protagonist and his companion are faced with the harshest of seasons, winter, which, as previously mentioned, contrasts with Gilbert's flourishing.[84] In this chapter the reason behind the protagonist's escape from the pound officers' inquiries is revealed: his father had died "of a sausage,"[85] the protagonist did not save him from choking, and he ended up locking his dead body in the attic:

> I washed and dried and put away and once it was all done I went upstairs to my father's room. I pushed the door and pulled the pull-string which opened the roof and drew the folding stepladder down. Then I went back to the kitchen and fetch him. […] He smelled like pork and smoke and toothpaste and I realised I'd never been so close to the old man to be able to smell him before. […] Then I placed him down on the bare boards of the attic.[86]

From this fragment we confirm the isolation into which the protagonist was cornered; there was no room for intimacy with his one relative, not even space for empathy. The father had become an embodiment of the protagonist's containment, the source of his enclosure and social distancing. In the logic of travel literature and the spiritual journey, there is a sense of optimistic expectation once the protagonist and his dog leave for the road. However, the novel turns for the worse; the journey is just another series of misfortunes.

As previously stated, Baume rewrites some of the motifs of a traditional subgenre in Irish literature: the big house novel, which includes the centrality of the house, the patriarchal head of the family, the madness of at least one of the descendants and, in some cases, the element of fire. Yuri Yoshino, in an essay on this type of fiction, explains the following:

> Most of the texts introduced as 'Big House novels' or 'country house novels' show different generic profiles such as national tale, gothic novel, social and/or political realms, travel writing, and so forth, and the Big House/country house profile is only one aspect, but a powerful one, in each text. Such multi-faceted characteristics of the texts require us to analyse them against conventions of the Big House novel as well as other genres.[87]

[84] The fact that this chapter of *Spill* is set during wintertime and that the attempted burning of the protagonist's household takes place during this time might kindle a connection between Baume and Joyce as well, at least in the sense in which Joyce has been dealt with in this article.
[85] S.Baume, *op.cit*., p. 83.
[86] *Ibid*., pp. 238-239.
[87] Yuri Yoshino, "'The Big House Novel' and Recent Irish literary Criticism", p. 51.

For the purposes of this article, Yoshino's comment works in favour of widening the spectrum on what to consider within the range of this tradition. In *Spill*, instead of producing a rewriting of the big house novel as a whole, Baume takes some motifs from it and uses them for parodic purposes.[88] To begin with, the motif of the house: the space that the protagonist of her novel inhabits is turned into a diminished version of an Irish big house. Equally important, the ongoing power struggle which also characterised big house novels is present inside the walls of the decadent home in Baume's novel (the father-son relationship), and relates to what Saeko Nagashima calls "the questions of hierarchy and authority".[89] The protagonist attempts to disrupt the power that has been exerted upon him by his father, which is mirrored in the way in which society treats him.

Even when the house is not located in the countryside as such, it is not in the centre of Ireland either. The oppression is depicted in the very architecture of the place, described as "a row of stuck-together houses, just enough to call a terrace, and the same again in the opposite side of the street,"[90] signalling a lack of opulence and individuality. Before the father's demise, the state of the place was not prosperous and was permeated with his prejudiced, unloving existence. Afterwards, the decay in its foundations is still fused and strengthened with his presence: "My father is the man you can smell all over the house, his house, but never find. […] You'll smell his dead breath, sausage scented, through the cracks in the room plaster and the draught from the keyhole of the shut-up-and-locked room".[91] The protagonist wants to let go of his repressed self, which is blended with his household and therefore the permeating patriarchal figure. As an attempt to consummate this change, the presence of fire as a purifier comes into being.[92] In the consumption of this Irish big house is where the "critical ridicule" of Baume's novel confirms the parodying of Gilbert's expectations on spiritual growth.[93] "Big Houses were important local landmarks" within literature and outside of it, which is why arson became a primary source for "symbolic purging".[94]

[88] This is not uncommon in contemporary Anglo-Irish fiction. McCabe, for example, utilizes them in his novel *The Butcher Boy*, where the protagonist's loss of sanity leads him to try to destroy his household after his parents' demise.
[89] Saeko Nagashima, "The Textual Big House in Bowen's 'A World of Love'", p. 32.
[90] S. Baume, *op. cit.*, p. 142.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[92] G. Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
[93] L. Hutcheon, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
[94] G. Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 56, 68.

The attempt to destroy this withering "big house" is presented alongside the protagonist's return—a return which does not carry with it the expected transformation. The transformation is not possible for the protagonist because, in the discursive regimes that had been exerted upon him, he had already been categorized as 'abnormal'. For this reason, the alienation that he had suffered in his hometown is carried while he is in his journey through "the middle-of-nowhere countries, left-behind countries, dead-end countries, no countries at all, really,"[95] whose threshold qualities do nothing but confirm his own condition. Defeated, the protagonist faces the rotting corpse of his father. With all this shrivelling in place, he makes a decision: "I must bring a can of petrol and a box of matches".[96] The plan seems both magnificent and mundane: "Can you picture the night slugs charred and shrivelling? The plates exploding on the walls, the drifted timbers reduced to kindling, the bran flakes turned to ash".[97] His attempt is to turn into ashes what was left of the only experiences he had, all associated with the abuse exerted upon him. The tension goes up again by the contrasting beauty of the descriptions of nostalgic memories and the scenery surrounding the last journey that prepares him for the burning of the house.

The "driving, driving, driving"[98] makes a full circle now that, after Christmas, the protagonist is ready to delve into his plan. Baume merges the epic expectations on the protagonist's mind with the crude reality of his possibilities, which makes the narration both thrilling and despairing:

> I don't have any petrol or paraffin or even alcohol. I scatter a box of firelighters across the living room floor. I find a can of Easy Oil and spray it onto the rocking chair, the coffee table, the carpet. I light a match. I throw the match.
>
> I run.[99]

Genette has something to say regarding parody and its relation to epic as a genre, which further illuminates the mechanisms upon which parody is working in this instance. Parody is in practice through the transformation of the hypotext's implication of heroism, which in Gilbert's case is presented through self-discovery. Baume is mocking Gilbert's subject in order

[95] S. Baume, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
[96] *Ibid.*, p. 245.
[97] *Idem.*
[98] *Ibid.*, p. 270.
[99] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

to strip down this "heroic" content, which then transforms her subject into an antithetical one.[100] For these underlying reasons, the readers know the plan will fail, but the eagerness of the protagonist subsumes that anguish. Whereas in the previous literary tradition of the big house fire does manage to consume whatever burden within the foundations of the household, in contemporary fiction there is "a tendency that reduces all previous fires to foreshadowings, anticipations, and prefigurations of the great conflagration that was to come".[101] Every attempt at freedom this character has had turns into another failure.

When the protagonist realizes that "the fire hasn't caught, that the house has already quenched it,"[102] there is an absolute loss of hope. The dominance that his father had upon him turns real once more in the survival of this structure. Going back to the association land has to the building of individual identity, the social structure in which the protagonist lives has overpowered his thrive and confirmed his alienation as a 'special' human, an 'un-right' one. All leads to an open ending in which he probably dives into the sea, not knowing how to swim.

The failure to burn the house is ridiculous and bitter. As previously stated, this is not the type of journey in which the character comes to a new version of himself, in direct contrast to what Gilbert proposes. In her account, fire is deliberately associated to nurturing and the sacred, but as her story progresses the link is set only in a very loosely based sense of the spiritual. Gilbert's life narrative is, in the end, reproducing a discourse in which the other is deemed as exotic, a narrative "from the perspective of a New York consumer and at no point is her ideological fantasy of each country challenged".[103] In Baume's novel, in contrast, there is an emphasis on the local that cannot be consumed by what is the dominant narrative and, even more so, an embodiment of this otherness which does not fit the dominant discourse and should not. The Irish author does what Gilbert does not, which is using a life narrative—albeit an explicitly fictional one— to "interrogate cultural discourses defining and distinguishing the normative and the ab-normative body".[104]

Just as it occurs in the texts by McCabe and Murphy, there is a manipulation of the element of fire that does not necessarily point to a positive conclusion in the diegesis, but definitely does celebrate dissonance and the

[100] G. Genette, *op. cit*. p. 12.
[101] V. Kreilkamp, *The Anglo-Irish Novel and the Big House*, p. 91.
[102] S. Baume, *op. cit*., p. 272.
[103] D. Philips, *op. cit*., p. 175.
[104] S. Smith and J. Watson, *op. cit*., p. 42.

renewal process in the possibility of letting go of pre-established notions. *Spill* is “a means of re-forming” Gilbert’s unsuccessful approach towards otherness.[105] I believe this is further enhanced by the fact that the United States, as an economic and cultural source of pervasive power, imposes practices—such as ‘self-improvement’—which go beyond the realm of the national. Opposite to the previous short stories, Baume introduces fire but extinguishes it before it catches on, suggesting the futility of a totalizing discourse which only accepts the normative. In doing this, Baume confronts the idea of the survival of a power structure reinforced by Gilbert’s manufactured betterment, signalling at the invasiveness of this conception of identity and how it can have repercussions on a local Irish context in which a character who is notoriously different from Gilbert’s persona attempts to follow resonant steps.

Stopping the fire and preventing her protagonist from getting rid of his past is Baume’s bitter welcoming of otherness. Taking Vera Kreilkamp’s argument that “[b]ecause Anglo-Irish fiction emerges from a history of conquest and occupation, to study the genre of the Big House novel is to trace the gradual evolution of a literary symbol set against the political history of class and sectarian conflict, rather than conciliation,”[106] it is possible to note that in this protagonist’s ‘spiritual quest’ there was a confrontation between a conquest—the discursive regimes—and an attempt at liberation, occurring that, as stated, it does not reach a synthesis. In the “Final Recognition and Reassurance” chapter in Gilbert’s text, she states that “[i]n the end, maybe it’s wiser to surrender before the miraculous scope of human generosity and to just keep saying thank you, forever and sincerely, for as long as we have voices”.[107] However, as demonstrated, she does not take full advantage of the potential subversive nature of travel literature, which “cannot be other than the negation of a previous vision of the world and its physical and human geography”.[108] Baume’s protagonist has little to thank “the miraculous scope of human generosity”, for he had received none of it except for his companion, a non-human being, and a marginalized one too, One Eye, the dog.

Nagashima argues that one of the triumphs of contemporary writings of the big house is to “criticize the long tradition of Irish self-mythologizing”.[109] In the three rewritings analysed here there is an echo or a clear

[105] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[106] V. Kreilkamp, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[107] E. Gilbert, *op. cit.*, p. 351.
[108] D. Nucera, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
[109] S. Nagashima, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

rejection of varied forms of self-mythologising: the authors decide to break from previous constructions and move into a less stable strain, which then works to their advantage to pose other kinds of specific concerns. Nagashima’s statement is pertinent not only in relation to the big house tradition, but to contemporary Irish literature in general. Kiberd declares, even if somewhat imposingly for creators, that “Irish writers must depict a land of instability, of lives in the making”.[110] In this chapter, fire is the uniting element that serves as a source of rewriting, as an embodiment of instability, and, therefore, of rethinking. In these narratives there is a setting forward of the tensions that permeate current social awareness in the contemporary context. Just as David Karlson-Weimann concludes, fire can become “an element through which the historicity of the intertextual condition is brought to the forefront”.[111]

Rewriting Literary Traditions: “Alight and burnt to the ground”

In these three texts, parody is used as a “weapon” to rewrite certain views on national literary and personal identity that are worth looking into in a celebratory fashion.[112] As a conclusion I follow Catherine Nash’s analysis on the three levels of the relationship between Irish fiction and place, in connection to what had been previously retaken by Norris for the purposes of this article, namely “[1] the abstract level of the nation […] [2] the visual relationship to place associated with the concept of ‘landscape’ [and] […] [3] the sensual lived experience of the local environment”.[113] McCabe’s “The Sisters,” Murphy’s “The Dead,” and Baume’s *Spill* convey particular ideas on what Ireland, its landscape, and the characters’ lived experiences are. McCabe rewrites the story of a child who is faced with the selfishness of individuals. With the literal burning of his household he realizes that his notion of *heimat*, his heart-castle, taught by the structure in which he lived and suggestive of the whole of his nation, no longer held. Murphy’s “The Dead” is grounded in the aspect of rejecting a previous literary discourse. The trigger for this rejection is the attack on the local library, which is in itself a symbol of knowledge and history that can, too, reference

[110] D. Kiberd, *The Irish Writer and the World*, p. 175.
[111] David Karlson-Weimann, *Burning Images. The Metaphor of Fire in Literature*, p. 17.
[112] L. Hutcheon, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
[113] Catherine Nash *apud* C. Norris, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

the wider spectre of the nation. From this attack, the only book surviving is the hypotext of the collection and, more precisely, the final short story. By minimizing the anecdote of Joyce's "The Dead," this narrative is alluding to the futile nature of keeping up with standards that no longer fit the context. In a prophetic fashion, Crazy Mary speaks up for the refusal of the previously accepted notion of idolizing one single perspective, which is then deepened by the commentary of literature being a form of perpetrating knowledge and, therefore, highlighting the importance of broadening the viewpoint that had previously been totalizing. Instead of reiterating Gabriel's overpowering sense of paralysis and its pervasive reflection on the nation, Crazy Mary pays homage to the already disruptive female characters in Joyce's story: Lily, Molly, and Gretta.[114]

Moving into the next rewriting, the self-discovery journey of Baume's protagonist emphasizes the impossibility to assume one single position regarding individuality that aims at an encompassing illusion of improvement. Going back to Guillén's findings within the logic of the particular and the diverse, the first set of narratives presents an individuality that emerges from the specificity of the Irish context, highlighting an honouring quality and a resistance to follow the practices of what had previously been represented in the Irish canon. In contrast, Baume's *Spill* partially branches out to another national tradition, in which she exposes, on a more panoramic spectrum, the implications of following a new dominating trend in the English language, that of a privileged class in the United States. Narrowing the scope, the novel asserts a displacement of focus to an individual who does not belong to the normative discourse, which emphasizes the need of looking at non-normative perspectives in order to illuminate the importance of dissonance. The fire which the protagonist in Baume's narrative tries to ignite is as unavailing as Gilbert's attempt to impose her very carefully edited improvement in others who are not her. Two further assertions may be extracted from this: on the one hand, this rewriting points to the fact that literature is indeed a means of conveying an important side of the social agenda that has been left unsaid by the discursive regimes to enhance "the autonomous individual and the universalizing life story";[115] on the other, it proves that one cannot exclude the social conditions that determine what otherness is.

[114] For a deeper insight on this disruption, please consult Margot Norris' *Suspicious Readings of Joyce's* Dubliners (2003).
[115] S. Smith and J. Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

These narratives, on the abstract level of the nation, signal the multiplicity of perspectives from which Ireland is made, adding to Kiberd's "quilt of many patches and colours" from which the territory has, historically, formed its diverse and complex literary tradition. The visual relationship of this equation, fire, is powerful in its paradoxical nature, as doubly coded as parody itself, in the sense that there is a destabilization of the aforementioned standards that the narrators had set prior to the conclusion to which each came. The smallest portion of this visual representation is provided by the McCooey quarters, which links the development of the individual to the national by means of the familiar household. On another, more general level, Murphy closes *Dubliners 100* by turning the remnants of Joyce's collection to ashes, which presents a productive departure that embraces what is being written in contemporary Ireland. Lastly, *Spill* presents a failed attempt to fit into a dominant narrative of a specific kind of success which did not take into account others' contexts and presents a protagonist "struggling against society and its structures, be it the family [or] local communities".[116] All of these experiences are centred in a very local ground, provided in a first-person voice that conveys the specificities of each situation. None of these texts are aiming at overpowering any other narrative that is being told; they are assuming their own very particular place within the tradition and fracturing its cement from within.

Fire, then, depicts the possibility of transformation: the basic element of parody. This is furthermore provided by the connection between the particular and the diverse, for each of the texts discussed portrays a singularity that comprises the various identities of the social constellations depicted in each diegesis, which in turn constitutes the current literary panorama of the nation—and even their convergence and divergence with other cultural practices. Fire, in its paradoxical association to disruption and reconstruction, works in order to honour and yet detach from the conventions on identity presented in their hypotexts. In light of what I have discussed, Bachelard's idea of rebirth serves this purpose. Neither McCabe, Murphy, nor Baume are using their hypotexts in order to deny the roots to which they belong; they make their bases quiver without disowning them. Joyce's canon and the Irish big house tradition are kept burning, thus alive, thanks to the dialogue established by the authors who dare to challenge them. In this way, fire works as a metaphor of rewriting

[116] Margarita Estévez-Saá, "Recent Contributions to the Irish Novel by Sara Baume, Anna Burns and Eleanor O'Reilly: On Language, Words and Wordlessness", p. 87.

as it represents a means of confrontation, but also a building upon the foundation on those same notions. The totalizing Irish traditions that these works portray are alight and burnt to the ground, which is what allows the critical distancing in this contemporary arena to exist. In this very ground the emerging multiplicity of voices which bring forward their specificities is made possible.

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Waters, Islands, and Insular Minds: Connection and Division in Sebastian Barry's Sligo Novels

@

Hedda Friberg-Harnesk

"No man is an island entire of itself", John Donne once stated in an often-cited meditation,[1] but no island is an island either, as it were —at least, not one "entire of itself".[2] Setting aside, here, my observation that Donne's primary concern seems to be that the size of the European continent remain undiminished —that no "clod be washed away [from it] by the sea"—[3] the mind drifts toward the accessibility of presumably isolated islands, actual and metaphorical, and toward the water surrounding them, presumably isolating them, but by the same token providing them with enabling connections. Indisputably, waters may divide, but, irrefutably, they also connect.

In the multifarious, multicultural field of contemporary Irish literature written in English, Sebastian Barry's fiction has been rightly praised, not only for its lyrical language and masterly weaving of histories —individual, familial, and national— but also for the heart in them. His characters are, as Fintan O'Toole rightly states, "'history's leftovers, men and women

[1] John Donne, "Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, Meditation XVII", p. 1108.
[2] *Idem*.
[3] *Ibid*., pp. 1108-1109.

defeated and discarded by their times"'.[4] Also, Claire Kilroy thinks that Barry's project on the Sligo McNultys gets "more exciting as it broaches contemporary times".[5] With this, I agree. Moreover, in the Sligo novels there is an intriguing fluidity of borders, a blurring of boundaries of, for example, nation, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. This chapter focuses on water-related elements in Barry's novels *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, *The Secret Scripture*, *The Temporary Gentleman*, and *Days Without End* and on their relationship to issues of connectedness and separateness. It should be said, perhaps, that I (still) "subscribe to the idea that metaphorization is a basic pattern for conceptualizing experience,"[6] but that I also attempt, here, to respect the physical qualities that rivers, oceans, shores, and islands may possess in their own right.

Scholars working within archipelagic studies present a shift in perspective which may serve as a "corrective to terrestrial scales of identity", as John Brannigan notes, citing John Kerrigan's *Archipelagic English*.[7] Keeping in mind Kerrigan's observation that "'archipelago' refers nowhere in its etymology to islands but rather to an area of sea",[8] one may readily regard an archipelago as "a maritime space, in which lie a group of islands",[9] thereby allowing emphasis to shift from the ways waters separate islands from each other, to the ways in which "seas and oceans surrounding the islands connect them to each other and to other land masses".[10] Inspired by such ideas and by Nels Pearson's suggestion that water, quite simply, is associated with "both connection and division",[11] this chapter explores waters, islands, and insularity in relation to issues of connection and separation in Sebastian Barry's Sligo novels.

The Garravogue and Other Waterways – The Whereabouts *of Eneas McNulty*

In the first of the Sligo novels, the town's connectedness to the world, especially through the Garravogue river, is established from the start. On

[4] Fintan O'Toole, *apud* Tara Harney-Mahajan, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
[5] Claire Kilroy, "*The Temporary Gentleman* by Sebastian Barry Review —the Upheaval of War", par. 8.
[6] Hedda Friberg-Harnesk, *Reading John Banville through Jean Baudrillard*, pp. 134-135.
[7] John Kerrigan, *apud* John Brannigan, *Archipelagic Modernism. Literature in the Irish and British Isles, 1890-1970*, p. 9.
[8] *Idem.*
[9] J. Brannigan, *op. cit.*, p. 9
[10] *Idem.*
[11] Nels Pearson, "Towards an Oceanic *Dubliners*", p. 375.

an individual level, Eneas, eldest of the McNulty brothers, learns from his father Tom that his ancestors —people with his "'own face'"[12]— were butter exporters in Sligo. They "'sent butter down the river and out into the wide ocean to Spain and Portugal where cows are scarce'".[13] In Eneas's childhood, his father's interest in music brings certain cultural goods, not butter, up the Garravogue. For the sake of his work with a small orchestra —known to play "New Orleans' finest […] in the lobby say of the Grand at Bundoran"— McNulty senior would order "music in exciting batches", from "New York and Galveston".[14] The music would pass "the Azores through the light-filled summer storms," remaining "purposefully silent in the little folded books, waiting for landfall on the Garravogue, waiting for Tom McNulty".[15]

Apart from American sheet music, the river carries "foreign timber" —and silt. According to Tom McNulty, "there's more muck comes up the Garravogue in ships than goes down in the dredgers".[16] If, as has been suggested, the openness of ports is crucial to "a global imagination" and the dockside is a "place in which the plurality of the sea-borne world" challenges landborne fictions,[17] then whatever openness Sligo possesses is threatened when its docks are in trouble. Consequently, the state of the Garravogue is of keen interest to Sligo town and if the river feels poorly, as when "a new terrible drift of sea-sand" threatens to clog up the port,[18] the town suffers, too. Open as he is to the world across the oceans, Eneas enlists with the British Merchant Navy at age sixteen and finds that life at sea "suits him": it is "not such a bad thing to be adrift on the limitless ocean".[19] Later, living in Sligo, he welcomes the influx of the world. With his knowledge of "vistas of foreign ports and sea-roads", entirely "unknown to the stay-at-home",[20] he is unlike more close-minded Sligonians. There is, for example, an aversion to Jewish people among Sligo matrons —among them Eneas's own mother. His mother shuns Finan's —a shop owned by Jewish people— because the Jews "were all in" on the crucifixion of Christ.[21] Eneas, by contrast, considers Finan's the "best shop in town" and,[22] having sailed

[12] S. Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, p. 4.
[13] *Idem.*
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[15] *Idem.*
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 7
[17] J. Brannigan, *op. cit.*, p.72.
[18] S. Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, p. 20.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[22] *Idem.*

with "men that were English and Jewish, Portuguese and Jewish too, or met such men in the ports",[23] he embraces their difference.

With his knowledge of sea-roads of the world, Eneas trusts the Irish Sea. To him, it does not constitute a physical barrier between nations, but rather, a "'shared space'".[24] In fact, when ultranationalists order Eneas,"under pain of fucking death",[25] to leave Sligo and the Irish island for good, the Irish Sea becomes an escape route as well as an enabling waterway, giving him access to England and employment. In Grimsby, he finds work on a herring boat and makes a living on cold waters, "over above Scotland near the ice-locked shores of Greenland".[26] In these regions, where "only the moon and the Northern Lights" provide color, Eneas manages to "hold Sligo in his head, floating, particular".[27] Neither vast sheets of waters, nor the "hatred his countrymen have for him", can separate him from the town. Rather, "away in those northern fishing grounds, the outlying fields […] of Grimsby you might say", reminiscent of the outlying fields of his hometown, Eneas feels connected and able to feel "something akin to love for Sligo".[28]

When work with the Grimsby fishermen ends after a dozen years,[29] the second world war makes Eneas enlist again. Knowing that this will aggravate his relationship with Sligo patriots, he nevertheless feels that work awaits him France, a country he is fond of. Shipped across waters, then, Eneas traverses the English Channel —or *La Manche*, that sleeve of a dress shared by England and France— "to rescue France from the threat of Hitler".[30] There is carnage on the "bloodied sand" of a Normandy shore, from which surviving British soldiers try to reach the "fishing boats", "pilot-boats", "estuary pleasure boats", and "dainty yachts", that heave on "the pitiful tide".[31] Stunned and deafened by a bomb, Eneas remains on the sands where "the dead are left lying".[32] Surviving, he spends the summer on a farm, and eventually returns to the coast, where fishermen spot him, pity him, and return him to "a murmuring shore of England".[33] Acting, perhaps, as habits and training of their trade bid, and arguably shaped by their shared maritime way of life, these French fishermen seem akin

[23] *Idem.*
[24] J. Brannigan, *apud* Lorna Siggins, "Stop Seeing Irish Sea As 'Barrier', says Brannigan", par. 1.
[25] S. Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, p. 118.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 128.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 129.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 130.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 135.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 136.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 137.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

to the British fishermen rescuing soldiers from Dunkirk and to Eneas's former comrades on the Grimsby fishing boat. They seem more closely connected by their shared coastal bonds, than divided by any differences of nationality.

When Eneas once more travels "long sea-miles" of ocean,[34] he again finds work —this time in Nigeria. Arriving in Lagos, he thinks it "sort of a Sligo, but bigger".[35] Its port —undoubtedly a dangerous, "transitional, rootless space"[36]— seems "alive as a Yankee port."[37] In Nigeria, manmade waterways become Eneas's business, as he digs "fantastically long canals"[38] that will tie together the regions of this vast country of "northern water and southern drought".[39] He works on "weird straight canals and bizarre twisting ones joining Muslim districts to Christian and Christian to pagan".[40] To Eneas, not just cities, but continents seem connected across vast sheets of water and he finds the new country strangely familiar: "[m]oonlight brings Nigeria closer to Ireland. It might be Ireland because the night is still and quiet as a stone".[41] Moreover, as years go by and a struggle for freedom erupts, the Nigerian "spick-and-span" policemen, in their wagons, remind Eneas of police vehicles tearing along the "backways of the county Sligo"; like them, the Nigerian policemen are "in the wrong suits to please the patriots".[42] On an individual level, though, Eneas has connected to a fellow canal-digger, Harcourt from Lagos —a man who scorns division and spots connections: "'Did it ever occur to you, brother Eneas'", he asks, "'that Lagos is almost the same word as Sligo, give or take an i or an a?'"[43]

After years of unemployment —it is now 1958— Eneas and Harcourt, "a broken-hearted whiteman and a broken-hearted blackman",[44] decline into the deep misery of social isolation, alcoholism and homelessness. The aging Eneas feels the pull of a place known to him as a sanctuary for "sailors and such",[45] the Isle of Dogs in London. When separated from Harcourt by Nigerian troubles, Eneas heads for this sanctuary.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 209.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 208.
[36] *Vid.* J. Brannigan, *op. cit.,* p. 72: Brannigan's analysis of "An Encounter," James Joyce's story from *Dubliner*s, in which Dublin's port emerges as a "transitional, rootless" and "perilous and liminal space".
[37] S. Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, p. 208.
[38] *Idem.*
[39] *Ibid.*, p.213.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 208.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 213.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 242.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 241.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 240.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

Seemingly "only lightly" moored "to the seabed",[46] somewhat like Sherkin Island in Sebastian Barry's *Prayers of Sherkin*,[47] the Isle of Dogs floats at a crossroads, where the "choppy waves of the channel and the Thames" meet and comingle.[48] This urban island, where Eneas and Harcourt meet up again, is well situated to receive human debris washed up from the oceans. Eneas's newfound army pension allows for the purchase of an old house, which they turn into a hotel. In keeping with the disposition of its owners and its enabling location, the Northern Lights Hotel becomes a haven for "the battered wanderers, the weary sailors, the refugees from ferocious lives, the distressed alcoholics [...] and the general flotsam of the great port river of life".[49] The various religions of the lodgers, "whether Methodist, Jewish, Baptist or renegade", are equally respected, so that, when someone dies here, the proprietors send for the rabbi, the minister, or Father Connolly, as religious preferences of the deceased indicate.

At the Northern Lights Hotel, then, the friendship between Eneas and Harcourt —formed across permeable boundaries of ethnicity and nationality— is the foundation of a sanctuary within which an enabling disregard for difference thrives. The Isle of Dogs does not emerge as insular, then, but open to multiplicity. Here, oceanic limitlessness, travelling up-stream on the tide, washes away false boundaries of nation, "race", and religion.

From Sligo Bay to the Suez Canal – The Temporary Gentleman

Much like in *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, Sligo's connection to the world is established in *The Temporary Gentleman.* Here, too, the river —spelled 'Garvoge'— and its estuary are sites of exchange with the elsewhere. At one point, when Jack, the second of the McNulty brothers, is on furlough in Sligo, he reflects on the intermingling of river and ocean in the estuary: "the deep black of the Garvoge mixing with the black Atlantic that had crept up on the tide, an ink so dark it was like a billion words printed over and over each other, the story of the world pushing up to the town bridge, the story of the world being sucked back down to Oyster

[46] *Ibid.,* p. 282.
[47] In this play, Fanny Hawke feels that her island "might be off for the Americas at any moment." S. Barry*, Prayers of Sherkin; Boss Grady's Boys*, p. 4.
[48] S. Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, p. 282.
[49] *Idem.*

Island and the Rosses, all unreadable, unknowable, cancelled out".[50] The Atlantic, then, carrying —as oceans do— the "story of the world" on its broad,[51] indifferent back, strives to present this story to Sligo town. The river Garvogue, though, rejects it and, in collusion with the turning tide, pushes it out again, back beyond the Rosses and the mouth of Sligo Bay, where, unread and unknown, it will be deleted.

Like Eneas, Jack McNulty negotiates maritime spaces. At age sixteen, when "the seas [are] heaving still with mines," he goes to sea —handsome in the white uniform of "a wireless officer".[52] He visits "every port of the earth" —or so he says— and rounds "Cape Horn a dozen times, in tempests and in resplendent calms".[53] Again like Eneas, he does not see the Irish Sea or the oceans beyond as barriers, but as highways leading out into the world. As presented in *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, Jack —a student of engineering and geology and later a major in the British Army— promises to become the pride of the McNultys. As he stands more revealed, though, as in *The Temporary Gentleman*, Claire Kilroy's characterization of him seems more apt. Kilroy notes that this McNulty novel is "narrated by the bad guy. Jack is a drinker, a gambler, an absent father, a neglectful husband, a gunrunner and, at the end, a coward, afraid to return home".[54] I have no quarrel with this assessment, but in the world of the novel, not everyone agrees: it is ironical that the last words that the gentle Eneas utters about his brother —who unawares leads Eneas's killers to the door— are: "Jack McNulty is a respectable man".[55]

Jack's reasons for repeatedly leaving and returning to Ireland are not persecution at home, but ambition. Apparently seeing his own social position —his father a tailor at an asylum, his mother a former dancer of obscure background— as an obstacle to upward mobility, he uses cleverness and charm to overcome disadvantages. By enlisting in the Royal Engineers and becoming a British officer, he gains the status of a gentleman, albeit a temporary one. Also, he marries Mai Kirwan, daughter of a wealthy Galway man. From the start, Jack is smitten by the sight of Mai —seemingly sea-borne like a sleek vessel— "sailing along in her loose black skirts",[56] "swept along the seafront",[57] or at one with the "glass-dark acreage" of

[50] S. Barry, *The Temporary Gentleman*, pp. 199-200.
[51] *Idem.*
[52] *Ibid.,* p. 191.
[53] *Ibid.,* pp. 191-192.
[54] C. Kilroy, *op. cit.*, par. 7.
[55] S. Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, p. 302.
[56] S. Barry, *The Temporary Gentleman*, p. 13.
[57] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Galway Bay,[58] but he is not blind to the advantages of her social position. After the death of Mai's parents, Jack enjoys a posh life in her inherited mansion by the bay, but, proving a fake gentleman, he gambles and drinks away Mai's mansion and savings. She is utterly ruined, financially and emotionally. Relocating to a small house in Sligo, they raise a family. There, through his own lifestyle, Jack shows Mai the uses of drink and directs her toward the quicksand of alcoholism. Largely as a result of his own choices, then, Jack McNulty finds himself "pathless, rudderless",[59] as his life becomes an endless negotiation with his multi-layered failings and their disastrous consequences. Using as escape routes the waters surrounding his native Irish island and stretching between the continents of the world, he is nigh permanently on the run from his own guilt.

At the present time of *The Temporary Gentleman* —the year is 1957 and the Gold Coast, as the "first African country to gain independence", has become Ghana— Jack McNulty is "back in Accra, after many comings and goings".[60] Jack sees the transformed country as a "bright new river", but one with "currents of darkness", and one where —much like in Ireland in the 1920s— there is "fear of old hatreds and old scores fomenting up".[61] He lives in a "little plaster house" outside Accra.[62] The Atlantic is nearby, he can smell it from his veranda —"that hazy and infinite expanse of acres, with its immense depths, and sometimes terrifying waters".[63] In his employ is Tom Quaye, whose kindness seems that of a friend, not a mere employee and to Jack Tom is a friend, across ethnic and social dividing lines. Tom's ambition is to help Jack mend a heart broken by guilt and by the tragedy of Mai's death and life. Since Tom's medicine is music, he tells Jack that "'a man should sing [that is what] we are here for on this earth'".[64] He adds: "'Ever since my wife she left me, if I was not singing I would go crazy'".[65] Laughing happily and reflecting that Tom pronounces crazy as "*krezy*", Jack feels boundaries between nations and their speech crumble: he thinks that "*krezy*" is "[p]ure Roscommon. Pure Ghana".[66] At another time, Tomelty, the Irish police inspector, also compares Ireland and Ghana. Warning Jack McNulty of betrayals and

[58] *Idem.*
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 202.
[60] *Ibid.*, p.11.
[61] *Idem.*
[62] *Idem.*
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[65] *Idem.*
[66] *Idem.*

sinister, “angry,” people moving about around Accra, he mutters: “‘I tell you, half the time I’m out here, it’s like I never left Ireland. Take away the heat and the fucking palm trees and the black skins and it’s all just Ballymena in the rain’”.[67]

On an assignment to Suez, Jack McNulty finds himself on the shore of the Small Bitter Lake. Colonel Nasser is expected to approach across the desert, “with his modern tanks and his passionate soldiery”,[68] to take back the Canal Zone. So, Jack thinks there will be “erasure”,[69] and he shuffles his two passports, the British and the Irish ones, in his hands. Of course, he thinks, he “was born British, like all [his] generation” of Irishmen”,[70] and he dwells on the word ‘British’ —a word by which “people mean [...] what they choose”.[71] He articulates a floating sensation: the “British Isles, where do they lie, in what ocean?” Positioned at the outer limits of expanses he has long managed to passably navigate, he is now daunted, perhaps, by the “loss of protective insulating [British] borders”.[72] Calculating that his Irish passport, more likely than the British one, will offer him safe passage out of present circumstances, he throws his British passport “into the silky waters” of the Suez Canal.[73] Expecting, again, that with Nasser’s victory, there will be “erasure and chaos”,[74] he knows that one thing likely to be erased is his self. He thinks:

> I might as well have thrown the rest of me too. It wasn’t just the part of me that had tried to think of myself as a gentleman that was over —a member of the professional classes, a British officer, a district officer in the British Foreign Service, a radio operator in the British Merchant Marine— it was the whole kit and caboodle that had been Jack McNulty. The passionate drinking man was gone, the husband was gone.[75]

Having already lost the means for the private life of a gentleman, Jack now discards, with his British passport, his public status as an officer and a gentleman. Finding the outlines of his identity blurred, and his sense of self fluid, he returns to Ghana to attempt the reconstruction of Jack McNulty.

[67] *Ibid.*, p. 249.
[68] *Ibid*, p. 292.
[69] *Idem.*
[70] *Idem.*
[71] *Idem.*
[72] *Vid.* J. Brannigan, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
[73] S. Barry, *The Temporary Gentleman*, p. 292.
[74] *Idem.*
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 293.

Shore, Island, and Littoral Delivery – The Secret Scripture

In *The Secret Scripture*, a "black river" runs through Sligo. According to old Roseanne, this river —it is the Garravogue— has "no grace for mortal beings", only for the swans that ride it "like some kind of plunging animals, in floods".[76] In the account of her life that Roseanne secretly writes, she emphasizes the river's rather sinister function as a conveyor of waste: it carries "rubbish down to the sea, and bits of things that were once owned by people and pulled from the banks, and bodies too, if rarely, oh and poor babies, that were embarrassments, the odd time".[77] The town of Sligo flushes its undesirables out in other ways, too. Old Roseanne, herself unwanted, disposed of, and forgotten at the Roscommon Regional Mental Hospital, notes: "Sligo made me and Sligo undid me".[78]

To Roseanne, who was never "beyond Sligo much",[79] the beach at Strandhill is still palpably present. As an old woman, she thinks of young Roseanne, going to the beach with her girlfriends. She remembers lazy tidewater —"the sea there made only the slightest effort at going in and out"— and good times; she and "the other girls from the Café Cairo" were beautiful "goddesses", who "liked to bring as much despair" as possible "to the lads", who were watching "on the sidelines of our happiness like sharks, devouring our attributes with their eyes. [...] Lovely humanity".[80] Foreshadowing Roseanne's future troubles, however, clergymen watch the young people, too: "Fr Gaunt was always there or some such, one or other of the curates, the herons among the minnows".[81] It has been noted that "the sea and the shoreline" may be seen as "social constructions of a territorial imagination, the inventions of a society increasingly estranged from the material realities of sea life".[82] Along such lines, Roseanne's observations of the beach-based courting behaviour of young Sligonians, in relation to the controlling strategies of the clergymen who stalk them —sharp-eyed, long-beaked "herons" ready to swallow powerless small fry— suggest "a territorial imagination" at work, constricting the open space of the young and re-constructing the beach at Strandhill

[76] S. Barry, *The Secret Scripture*, p. 3.
[77] *Idem.*
[78] *Idem.*
[79] S. Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, p. 204.
[80] S. Barry, *The Secret Scripture*, pp. 146-147.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[82] J. Brannigan, *op. cit.*, p. 96: Brannigan makes this observation in his analysis of Joyce's "Nausicaa" chapter of *Ulysses*.

as a social space. A resulting estrangement from the "material realities" of the shoreline and the waters of Sligo Bay seem part of processes at work to entrap Roseanne.

In an instinctive move, perhaps, away from social interventions that will mark her life, young Roseanne plunges into the water. At Strandhill, she knows, waters are "safe enough," for the "first few feet".[83] At high tide, though, "you are suddenly in the big water of the bay there, the big muscle, enormous, like the famous Hudson river".[84] Below surface, she finds the undersea "glittering, speckled"[85] and she gives her "heart to it", and is "moved by it".[86] She is disorientated, but feeling the muscular current carry her away, it is "all happiness".[87] Roseanne's instincts seem to tell her to let go, give in to the waters of Sligo bay, become "like a word lost in a swell of music"[88] —to disconnect from humanity.

When Roseanne is pulled out of the water, saved, "suddenly enveloped, stolen back, taken up, by human arms"[89]—familiar ones— she seems to feel cheated. She is back on the beach with "the world and its aunt gathered about" and the music dies.[90] The arms that so expertly rescue her from the promises of her underwater imagination, belong to her future husband Tom, the youngest McNulty brother. The safety on offer here will become a cage, not so much in the shape of her too-short marriage to Tom, but of a cold room —cut off from the sea, the shore, and from life itself— in the Roscommon Regional Mental Hospital.

Strandhill, as well as the Garravogue and its estuary, delimit Roseanne's environment later in life. The discarded wife of Tom, she lives as an outcast in an isolated beach hut. The reason is, according to Jack in *The Temporary Gentleman*, that his mother, old Mrs McNulty —who also has pressured his sister Teasy to become a nun— has moved "to disencumber [Tom] of Roseanne".[91] In this, the old matriarch is supported by Father Gaunt, who turns to Rome for an annulment of the marriage. Accused of adultery and diagnosed on flimsy grounds as insane, Roseanne is confined to "the old tin hut in Strandhill that Tom formerly used to store things for

[83] S. Barry, *The Secret Scripture*, p. 146.
[84] *Ibid.*, p. 150.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 149.
[86] *Ibid.*, p. 150.
[87] *Ibid.*, p. 151.
[88] *Idem.*
[89] *Idem.*
[90] *Idem.*
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 180.

his dance hall".[92] As if, Jack reflects, "she was a broken chair".[93] So, Roseanne becomes the madwoman of Strandhill.

Roseanne's hut stands above the highwater mark of course, not exposed to floods, but to strong winds and saline spray from Sligo Bay. Below the low-tide level, the beach becomes the realm of the littoral, marked by "abundant dissolved oxygen, sunlight, nutrients, generally high wave energies and water motion, and, in the intertidal subzone, alternating submergence and exposure".[94] It is a rich and varied environment, then, and life thrives there, but up on the beach, Roseanne does not.

At one point, Eneas, dishevelled and at first a stranger to Roseanne, spots the madwoman —no longer his brother's wife— tending her roses. Invisible to society, these two do see each other and Eneas spends the night.[95] Her environment enriched, Roseanne becomes pregnant, but later, she also falls ill.[96] Needing help, she walks into Sligo to appeal to Mrs McNulty, who rejects her. In sleety rain, Roseanne walks back along Strandhill road.[97] With miles to go and the storm picking up, she leaves the road to take a shortcut along the beach, thinking that by following the safe sand road, a route "motorcars used to [take] at low tide", her walk will be miles shorter.[98] Down on the sand, though, there is chaos: "all was like a dance […] the rain like huge skirts, swirling and lifting […] the whole of the strand and the sea between Strandhill and Rosses blanked out".[99] The storm tears at her stomach and her child, the "little creature of elbows and knees".[100] Knowing she is off course and likely to disappear in "the realm of currents and fishes",[101] she tries to take out a course for Coney Island from a bollard. She fears that she walks "towards the channel of the Garravogue, a disaster unimaginable".[102] Disoriented in this realm that struggles to know if it is land or water, Roseanne spins in the storm: "Where was the mountain […]? Where was Strandhill and where was Coney?"[103] Then, in the "blue, angry light" of lightening, she sees "the great prow of

[92] *Idem.*
[93] *Idem.*
[94] Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Littoral Zone", par. 1.
[95] S. Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, pp. 201-207.
[96] S. Barry, *The Secret Scripture*, p. 259.
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 268.
[98] *Ibid.*, p. 270.
[99] *Idem.*
[100] *Idem.*
[101] *Ibid.*, p. 271.
[102] *Ibid.*, pp. 270-271.
[103] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

Ben Bulben looming, like a liner", to the east.[104] Relieved and grateful for this moment of reorientation, she forges ahead toward "the mound of Coney Island".[105]

Within sight of the island, that rises beyond the intertidal zone, Roseanne feels her own "water gush".[106] In the shifting waters, the warm flow of birth merges with the cold tide and the relationship between tide and rocky island is renegotiated, as it were. With "another hundred aching strides",[107] water becomes rocks and Roseanne reaches them. "Half expired",[108] she comes to rest among boulders, and when she awakens, contractions squeeze her. Protected by Coney Island, a child is born into falling rain and receding tide. Roseanne sees "the crown of a little head, […] a shoulder, […] a face, […] a belly and two legs" and hears her baby calling out, "tinily, to the island, to Sligo, to [her]".[109] When Roseanne wakes up a second time, the storm has swept out of Sligo and there is no child. Plucked from the nest of boulders, the baby has been 'saved' from Roseanne by those who claim to protect her.

Although an island, then, Coney has not been out of reach for Roseanne. Neither do the waters of the Garravogue estuary constitute a barrier, here, but offer a path to the island —an enabling passage. What destroys Roseanne, is not obstacles thrown up by an island or surging, surrounding waters, but the insular minds of townspeople.

Diluvian Fears and Hopes – Days Without End

At focus in the following section is a diluvian episode in Sebastian Barry's *Days Without End*, a novel of Irishmen involved in brutal wars in nineteenth-century United States. The novel is grim, but funny and gentle, too —remarkably so, in the light of the ground it covers. Before turning to my reading of it, though, another quick look at Sligo's Garravogue river is warranted. The river has figured prominently in my discussions of *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, *The Temporary Gentleman*, and *The Secret Scripture* and, in the following passage from *The Temporary Gentleman*, it recurs as a potential cause of diluvian catastrophe.

[104] *Idem.*
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 272.
[106] *Idem.*
[107] *Idem.*
[108] *Idem.*
[109] *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

Watching the Garravogue at one point, Jack McNulty recalls that while living in the Harbour House on the river, he used to think of it as a "being so entirely capable and strong, wide, deep and dark", that it might "pull away the town from its moorings, pull away the house, pull away the landscape like a strange carpet".[110] Jack's fear of radical change seems akin to the "anxiety about the loss of control over water",[111] likely to occur among coastal and seafaring people. Flexing its muscles, the Garravogue here shows that it may rise in a flood —due to natural factors, or human interference— erasing boundaries and causing irreversible change.

In the episode from *Days Without End* at focus, not merely the fears, but the facts of a deluge are central. Moreover, the culprit is not a mighty river here, but an innocent-looking mountain stream. The narrator of the event —and of the novel— is Thomas McNulty, great-uncle of the McNulty siblings of the Sligo novels.[112] According to family mythology, Thomas left Sligo for Canada "in the days of hunger", and travelled the oceanic highway across the Atlantic.[113] Fortunate enough to survive the voyage, he reports becoming "a trooper in the Union Army".[114] Lines connect, then, across oceans, continents, and family histories. At age fifteen, this first Thomas finds himself in a downpour, "under a hedge in goddamn Missouri".[115] Here, he meets John Cole, a youth with "river-black eyes",[116] who becomes Thomas's lifelong partner and "all [his] love".[117] They become, as one critic states, "quietly, unambiguously, a couple, without guilt or question".[118]

To some extent, the mutual understanding of these "two wood-shavings of humanity in a rough world" is rooted in a shared outsider status:[119] John Cole's "great-grandma was a [*sic*] Indian whose people were run out of the east long since",[120] and Thomas is a "child of poor Sligonians", who, being "blighted likewise," had little "to crow about".[121] Finding their first line of work in a saloon in Daggsville, Missouri, a town without women, where a

[110] S. Barry, *The Temporary Gentleman*, p. 200.
[111] *Vid*. J. Brannigan, *op. cit*., p. 2.
[112] The sister of the three McNulty brothers is a mendicant nun in Bexhill-on-Sea (*vid*. S. Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, p. 157).
[113] S. Barry, *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*, p. 43.
[114] *Idem*.
[115] S. Barry, *Days Without End,* p. 3.
[116] *Ibid*., p. 5.
[117] *Ibid*., p. 30.
[118] Benedicte Page, "Sebastian Barry. 'It's Terrifying, but Fascinating That Human Groups Have These Impulses'", par. 5.
[119] S. Barry, *Days Without End*, pp. 5-6.
[120] *Ibid*., p. 4.
[121] *Idem*.

Mr Noone wants “clean boys” as dancers —notably for “genteel” dancing: “No kissing, cuddling, feeling or fumbling”.[122] As Joanna and Thomasina, they become good dancers, but puberty puts an end to this pleasant work, and they enlist in the army together.

Having enlisted, John Cole and Thomas are sent to the “wild knotted country” of the “Yurok people” of Northern California.[123] They settle into army routines, grow to like their major, love each other and, at night, they “quietly fuck” and go to sleep.[124] Although they have known that their “work” will be “Indians”,[125] the effect of that work hits them hard. Sebastian Barry has commented on the atrocities committed by whites against Native Americans —“‘the sheer […] brutality of it all’”[126] — and he is unsparing in depicting such atrocities. Thus, the attack on an Indian camp, in which Thomas and John participate, fiercely killing women and children—“not a brave [warrior] among” the dead afterwards[127] —emerges as merciless and leaves the two soldiers feeling like “ghosts”, “dislocated”, “not there”.[128]

After the carnage, the three hundred soldiers camp in a scallop-shaped glen, surrounded by hills,[129] and bordering on a small stream. Here, they are surprised by a “tantrum” of rain.[130] Every minuscule river in this mountain region becomes a “huge muscled snake” and soon the camp is flooded.[131] Soldiers climb up on the low roofs and “dozens […] shimmied up” into trees.[132] Thomas and John Cole push “over through the lead-heavy water and clumb a tree likewise”.[133] They see the major “swimming up the way” and “critters swimming for their lives”.[134] A flood wave, looking “like twenty feet of death”,[135] rapidly approaches and the relationship between land and water is instantly recalibrated: “It looked like someone had put the ocean on top of the forest […] and now the ocean was […] hammering and surging down toward us”.[136] In a suddenly topsy-turvy, diluvian world,

[122] *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
[123] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[124] *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[125] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[126] B. Page, *op. cit.*, par. 8.
[127] S. Barry, *Days Without End*, p. 37.
[128] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[129] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[130] *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[131] *Idem.*
[132] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[133] *Idem.*
[134] *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.
[135] *Ibid.*, p. 50.
[136] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

soldiers become "citizens of a shallow sea" and the flood, a "wild and vicious thing",[137] spreads across the camp. With it come trees and bushes and creatures of the forest and away with it goes everything "that was able to be unmoored and move".[138]

The deluge is a fact, then, the army's loss of control over water is total, and the camp submerged. Here, Sebastian Barry can be seen to interpolate, in his epic novel of American nineteenth-century warfare, a brief fiction of submergence. After all, war, like a deluge, is a powerful "being", which, capable of pulling away a "landscape like a strange carpet",[139] tends to wash away everything and everybody in its path and cause radical change. In Barry's episode —like in larger-scaled fictions of submergence— a "utopian impulse" can be discerned. Applying Fredric Jameson's distinction, as noted by John Brannigan, between "the utopian vision," involving radical change, and a utopian desire, which is "a kind of faith or hope in the possibility of alternatives",[140] this flood causes immediate local change and can be seen, perhaps, as triggering certain, more long-range, utopian hope on an individual level.

In the mountain camp, then, the deluge causes such disastrous immediate change as death and starvation: three hundred soldiers become two hundred and for the survivors the loss of supplies, washed away by the flood, is disastrous. Another immediate effect for the troopers is a retreat to Missouri. For the central characters, one effect of the disaster seems to be a faint hope in alternatives —most immediately, perhaps, the hope of not fighting Indians again and the hope that distance from the site of committed horrors will alleviate guilt. Such hope, though, is muffled by the suffering of a long ride through severe, lethal cold. Moreover, for the true victims of this situation, the Native Americans, who struggle for survival, there is not much change. One patch of mountain may have been cleared of white soldiers, but temporarily so. The war grinds on.

On an individual level, again, one unspoken hope, seemingly nurtured by John and Thomas, possibly strengthened by the near fatal experience of the Californian deluge, would entail the possibility of finding sustainable alternatives to conventional modes of being in society. Thus, leaving the service and Fort Laramie because of John's failing health, they launch a civilian life which includes Winona, a Sioux child, orphaned in the wars.

[137] *Ibid.*, p. 50.
[138] *Idem.*
[139] S. Barry, *The Temporary Gentleman*, p. 200.
[140] Fredric Jameson, *apud* J. Brannigan, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

The girl, whom they come to love as a daughter, is at first taken on as a domestic servant —with the blessings of the wife of their commanding officer at Fort Laramie. Having located Titus Noone, their former employer, they join him in Grand Rapids, Michigan. They introduce Winona to him as John Cole's daughter and he offers the three of them work. Living "like a family" in a rented riverside house,[141] they make a "Little Kingdom" for themselves.[142] This realm is an island of sorts, striving —to invoke Donne again— to be "entire of itself".[143] Strictly private, it separates them from the society at large, but it ties them closely to each other in its promise of freedom from persecution. Thus, it shelters the mixed ethnic composition of their small group —Winona a Native American of the Prairies, Thomas a white Irishman, and John the great-grandchild of displaced eastern Native Americans— and fortifies them, perhaps, against the racial prejudice to which the insular mind-set of the townspeople of Grand Rapids subject Winona. As an "Injun",[144] she has met with discrimination before, and here, she is kept out of the local school, because, as the school master explains, even if she is "half-caste" and John Cole's "own blood,"[145] townspeople "would not stand for" "accepting 'an Indian girl'" into the school.[146] In the end Winona is tutored privately, but as a Native American she continues to walk a slack line between inclusion and exclusion from ordinary life.

Working for "twenty-five dollars a week" in Noone's music-hall[147] —which features the "nicest bunch of black-face minstrels between Timbuctoo and Kalamazoo"[148]— the family entertains Michigan miners in need of an illusion. Thomas performs in a dress, "lady-like and lovely", John is "the beau [...] swanking round", and Winona sings "'Rosalie, the Prairie Flower'".[149] Their performance works magic. Thomas hears the miners drawing "in their breath like a sea tide" receding on a shingle beach and develops the conviction that,[150] "[a]cting ain't no subterfuging trickery. Strange magic changing things. You thinking along some lines and so you become that new thing".[151] On the stage, then, new truths may renew audience and actor alike. At a later time, Thomas, riding a stagecoach

[141] S. Barry, *Days Without End*, p. 135.
[142] *Ibid*., p. 134.
[143] J. Donne, *op. cit*., p. 1108.
[144] *Ibid*., p. 270.
[145] *Ibid*., p. 133.
[146] *Idem*.
[147] *Ibid*., p. 126.
[148] *Ibid*., p. 124.
[149] *Ibid*., p. 126.
[150] *Ibid*., p. 132.
[151] *Ibid*., p. 273-374.

through Wyoming with Winona, reflects on such transformations and on the fluidity of gender boundaries. Dwelling on the interplay between that which is masculine in him and that which is feminine, he thinks: "I feel a woman more than I ever felt a man, though I were a fighting man most of my days. Got to be thinking them Indians in dresses shown my path. Could gird in men's britches and go to war. Just a thing that's in you and you can't gainsay".[152]

Performing in the music hall dressed as a woman, then, Thomas soon thinks it natural not to be "always changing garb by the hour", and finds that there is "greater contentment in it for [him] to wear a simple-hued housedress and not be always dragging on the trews".[153] Also, in parenting Winona, he often takes on the mothering role. In private, he and John find comfort in their private 'kingdom' and —radically— secretly marry. Out of society's view, then, they continue to cross boundaries of sexual orientation.

In an interview, Sebastian Barry mentions the sense of liberation he felt when reading that being gay was not "'a problem in America'", apparently, "'until psychoanalysts started putting names on things'".[154] Rather, "'before some blasted scientist got tricky with the language'", homosexuality was "'a sort of normality'", and "'[l]ads in the army and navy, they just got on with it'".[155] Homosexuality, Barry reflects, "'is not something that needs our tolerance'".[156] In Barry's novel, Thomas and John do seem to live in an alternative "'sort of normality'", in which they are able to simply get "'on with it'";[157] significantly, though, they do so in secret, never openly displaying their sexual orientation.[158] A kiss in public, for instance, is of course unthinkable and Thomas marvels at the transforming magic of their music hall work. Performing, their stage personae may display affection for each other —may kiss, even— their "love in plain sight".[159] Still

[152] *Ibid.,* p. 273.
[153] *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.
[154] B. Page, *op. cit.*, par. 7.
[155] *Idem.*
[156] *Ibid.*, par. 6.
[157] *Ibid.*, par. 7.
[158] The situation of personnel serving in the U.S. armed forces in the period 1993 to 2011, under the official policy referred to as DADT —"Don't Ask, Don't Tell"— comes to mind. This policy stipulated that servicemen and servicewomen "not openly declare their sexual orientation" (Ed. of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, par. 2), nor "talk about their sexual orientation or engage in sexual activity" (Ed. of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *ibid.*, par. 3), and it admonished their superiors: "don't pursue, and don't harass", thus discouraging them from questioning "service members about their sexual orientation" (Ed. of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *ibid.*, par. 1, 3) It was not until after the repeal of the policy, in 2011, that gay men and lesbians could "serve openly in the military" (Ed. of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *ibid.*, par. 4).
[159] S. Barry, *Days Without End*, p. 132.

and always, though, they are forced to hide that love offstage and can only "imagine" life in a, for them, "unknown realm where lovers act as lovers without concealment".[160] A society in which same-sex couples may display affection "without concealment" remains a utopia here —imaginable, but unreachable.

To conclude, in Sebastian Barry's Sligo novels, issues of connectedness and separateness are prominent. Often, such issues are tied to water-related elements. Thus, Sligo's connection to the outside world through the river Garravogue is amply demonstrated. So is the connectedness of the Irish island to the world, especially through the enabling waters that surround it. The Irish Sea and the Atlantic Ocean offer escape routes, then, for the McNulty brothers Eneas and Jack, and they open doors for them to alternative lives elsewhere. This option seems unavailable for Roseanne McNulty, who does not leave Sligo. In these novels, moreover, an island is not necessarily insular, as the example of the Isle of Dogs shows, in *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*. This isle emerges as a sanctuary for multiplicity, in which false separations between nationalities, ethnicities, and religion are swept away. Also, in *The Secret Scripture*, it is not Coney Island that puts barriers in Roseanne's way, but the insular minds of townspeople. Physical boundaries are permeable too: the tidal zone in which Roseanne gives birth seems a realm struggling to know if it is land or water. Also, as any deluge tends to cause destruction and radical change, the flood in the mountains, in *Days Without End*, turns the relationship between land and water upside down, as the ocean seems to place itself on top of the forest. In this novel, too, false and destructive boundaries, that separate individuals of certain ethnicity or sexual orientation from mainstream society, are made visible. For the central characters, faint hopes of gaining the liberty to shape for themselves alternative modes of being in society, flicker like northern lights on the horizons of their lives.

[160] *Ibid.*, p. 128.

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Humour and the Gods: Reshaping Traditions in *The Infinities* by John Banville

@

Aurora Piñeiro

From this shaded within, all that
is without the high awning of glass, the trees,
the sunlight, that broad strip of cerulean sky,
seems a raucous carnival.

John Banville*, The Infinities.*

As a rewriting of the myth of Amphitryon, *The Infinities* (2009) by John Banville is a novel that partakes of an ancient literary lineage dating back to Plautus' tragicomedy from the second century BC. This textual family includes multifarious adaptations and rewritings in different languages and reaches beyond the scope of a European tradition, as it may be seen in the Brazilian play *Um deus dormiu lá em casa* (1949) [*A God Slept at Home*] by Guilherme Figueiredo or in Cole Porter's musical *Out of this World* (1950).

Most versions revolve around the story of Amphitryon and his servant Sosia who have been away at war and are about coming back home. In the meantime, Jupiter, in the guise of Amphitryon, has decided to seduce Alcmena, the latter's wife, and Mercury is in charge of buying his Olym-

pian father some time and getting rid of those who would interfere. In order to fulfil his task, Mercury has adopted the physical appearance of Sosia, while real Sosia has been sent home with the news of his master's arrival. When real Sosia meets fake Sosia, a series of misunderstandings is triggered in a tragicomedy about female fidelity, the meddling of the gods with human affairs and identity as a multi-layered notion. Of the many renderings of the story that have been produced throughout the centuries, *Amphitryon* (1807) by Heinrich von Kleist is the one that Banville used as a main source for his own adaptation of the story in the play *God's Gift* (2000) and for his later rewriting of both sources in the novel *The Infinities* (2009).

The Infinities might be approached as a novel of ideas, written in a non-mimetic key. But it is, before anything else, a comic work in which different forms of humour (irony, sarcasm, the burlesque) serve the purpose of unsettling or resignifying varied philosophical and literary notions: the idea of origin, the conventions of classical and Shakespearean comedy, the assumptions about stock characters in the Irish big house novel and the Banvillean canon itself. The aim of this article is to analyse the way the Irish author reimagines these traditions in a postmodern parodic fashion in which the use of ironic inversions becomes a strategy to explore the themes of the self, the art of writing —the authority of narrative voices and shifting perspectives are at focus here— and the power of laughter to destabilise "the given" when it comes to narratives of the past.

Rewriting and Postmodern Parody

In *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree* (1982), Gerard Genette presented hypertextuality as one of the five categories in his theory on transtextuality or the textual transcendence of writings. According to the French narratologist, hypertextuality means a "relationship uniting a text B (…the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (…*the hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not [necessarily] that of commentary".[1] In this sense, the hypertext is a "text in the second degree" or "derived from another preexistent [one]", with "text B being unable to exist [without] A, from which it originates through a process [of] transformation".[2] The previous definition implies that hypertextuality is a form of rewriting that sacrifices a certain degree of autonomy in favour of other effects or principles in

[1] Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests. Literature in the Second Degree*, p. 5.
[2] *Idem*.

a philosophy of composition, and it is transformative instead of imitative. Later in this book, Genette posits that the three main forms of hypertextuality are pastiche, parody and travesty;[3] but for the purposes of my reading I will focus on the second one, although the three of them are present, in different degrees, in *The Infinities*.

Parody is a writing mode as old as the history of literature, but it became a favourite one with postmodern art, which is defined by Linda Hutcheon as a cultural activity "fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political. Its contradictions may well be those of late capitalist society, but whatever the cause, these contradictions are certainly manifest in the important postmodern concept of 'the presence of the past'".[4] When Hutcheon refers to this presence of the past, she makes it clear that this is not a nostalgic return, but "a critical revisiting, an ironic dialogue with the past of both art and society".[5] The previous ideas pave the way for her to speak in defence of parody as an ideal mode of writing when it comes to postmodern art: "Parody is a perfect postmodern form [...], for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies. It also forces a reconsideration of the idea of origin or originality that is compatible with other postmodern interrogations of liberal humanist assumptions".[6] In terms of its formal procedures, "[i]ronic versions of 'trans-contextualization' and *inversion* are its major formal operatives, and the range of pragmatic ethos is from scornful ridicule to reverential homage."[7] Bearing these definitions in mind, we will approach Banville's reworkings of the Amphitryon story, with an emphasis on his narrative version.

Banville's Hypertexts: A Path towards The Infinities

As a first stage in appropriation, Banville sets his drama adaptation and his prose version of the Amphitryon myth in the context of an Irish big house narrative. In his play, *God's Gift*, Amphitryon has become General Ashburningham, who has just won the Battle of Vinegar Hill in County Wexford, in 1798. This relocation has several historical and political

[3] *Vid.*, p. 8.
[4] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 4.
[5] *Idem*.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[7] L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 37 (italics are my own).

implications,[8] but in terms of the revisiting of a literary past, it connects his two renderings of the story with the images and tropes of the Irish big house novel as both a national and individual tradition. According to Vera Kreilkamp, this literary subgenre has as some of its defining features "the neglected house as symbol of family and class degeneration, the improvident landlord alienated from his duties, [and] the native Irish usurper of the Ascendancy estate".[9] When Banville uses adaptation and a parodic rewriting of these conventions, he does it in the terms established by Hutcheon: as "double-voiced discourse" and as a postmodern exercise that "points to the differential but mutual dependence of parody and parodied texts".[10] Thus, on the one hand he pays tribute to Elizabeth Bowen's big house novels[11] (among others) when he makes a microcosm out of the life of an Irish manor and, on the other hand, he unsettles the conventions of such microcosm by incorporating into his novel inaccurate historical and literary references, as well as elements of the extraordinary, such as the presence of Greek gods among the characters in the story. On top of it, his double-coded discourse is also self-referential. The author toys with the similarity between family names and uses the Godleys for *The Infinities* and the Godkins for *Birchwood* (1973); or deals with perceptual inconsistencies in the discourse of his main narrator the way he had done in earlier retakes on the big house tradition, such as *The Newton Letter* (1982), to mention just a few examples.

But this first stage or move into Banvillean territory is of a further literary and philosophical intent. In an article on Kleist's writings, Banville stated that "the essence of Kleist's dramatic world is its ambiguity, one of the chief reasons that his work speaks so directly to our own confused and uncertain times".[12] It is this ambiguity, which is textual but also has to do with the irresolute paradox of our being in the world, that constitutes one of Banville's thematic obsessions and the need for a second and more intrepid rewriting of the Amphitryon story in the form of a novel, which will expand the thematic scope of the myth and exhibit an awareness of the artificiality of discourses related to notions on identity, among others.

[8] For a further analysis of those, see Hedda Friberg-Harnesk, "In the Sign of the Counterfeit: John Banville's *God's Gift*", p. 73.
[9] Vera Kreilkamp, "The Novel of the Big House", p. 62.
[10] L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. XIV.
[11] For a more detailed analysis of the intertextual relationship between Bowen's writings and those by Banville, *vid*. Derek Hand, "John Banville and the Idea of the Precursor: Some Meditations", location 562.
[12] John Banville, "Kleist, Neglected Genius", screen 1.

The Infinities is a novel in three parts that narrates one day in what is initially presented as the death throes of a famous though retired mathematician named Adam Godley. He lives in a typical (decadent) Irish big house and, in the last segment of his agony, he has been moved to the Sky Room, the upmost room in the manor, where he used to conduct his research and where he developed the equations that support the theory of the Infinities: this is a theory that communes with that of multiverses, and thus facilitates the notion of multiple selves when it comes to dealing with (human) identities. The regular household includes Ursula, Godley's second wife; Petra, the young daughter; Ivy Blount, last descendant of the original house owners but now in service of the Godley family; and Adrian Duffy, the cowman. The imminent death of old Adam brings young Adam and his wife Helen back to the family home, as well as other unexpected visitors such as Roddy Wagstaff (Petra's boyfriend) and, in their Greek denominations, several classical deities, which includes Zeus, Hermes and Pan.

The Infinities preserves some of the recurrent motifs of the Amphitryon myth and its literary renderings, with Hermes the trickster as the deity in charge of manipulating time in order to facilitate his father's adventures with a mortal woman. Hermes is the main narrator in the novel, with an omniscience reinforced by the fact that he is a god and has the faculties not only to enter human minds at will, but also to inspire them with thoughts and actions, or even disguise as one of them to interfere directly with their affairs. His presence is also a means to confirm Godley's theory of the Infinities, as one of the early episodes in the novel shows.

In one of the first scenes in the Sky Room, where Ursula is paying a morning visit to her comatose husband, Hermes, as the main narrative voice, filters her perception of other presences in the room and words it in the following terms:

> they [human beings] think it is the dead that haunt them, while the simple fact is […] they live amidst interpenetrant worlds and are themselves the sprites that throng the commingling air. For all she knows it might be one of her countless selves that she is meeting, drifting from another plane into this one all unawares.[13]

This view of the universe(s) and selves is not only discussed in different parts of the novel but also informs, in a performative fashion, the construc-

[13] J. Banville, *The Infinities*, p. 22.

tion of the narrative realities of Banville's text as a whole. And it is one of the ways in which the novel undermines the notion of a unified and coherent subject that Hutcheon refers to when writing about the postmodern interrogation of humanist assumptions. In terms of Jean-François Lyotard's writings, this challenging of a unified notion of subjective consciousness is part of a more general contestation of any totalizing or homogenizing system, or what Lyotard, in particular, called metadiscourses or grand narratives.[14] When it comes to literary works, "provisionality and heterogeneity contaminate any neat attempts at unifying coherence (formal or thematic)",[15] which will be examined later in this paper.

The previous paragraphs might create the impression that *The Infinities* is a solemn novel of ideas; but it is via parody and its ironic inversions that this writing turns the conventions of the big house novel upside down, unsettles those of dual plot comedy, and undermines the notion of a narrative centre. In the following pages I will focus on four examples where humour, embodied in ironic inversions, the language of the mock-heroic and narrative identity juxtapositions produces the dislocations that characterise this eccentric rendering of the story.

Parodic Inversions in The Infinities

As a starting point, my analysis will look at what might be called the dethroning of the "king" or old Adam in his role as the big fellow in the house. It is important to mention here that the initial event that triggers the rest of actions in this work is that old Adam suffered a stroke in the following circumstances:

> enthroned at morning within the necessary place —to put it as delicately as I may— he crouched too low and strained too strenuously in the effort of extruding a stool as hard as mahogany, and felt, actually felt, a blood vessel bursting in his brain, and toppled forward on to the floor, his face to the tiles and his scrawny bare bum in the air, and passed at once, with what in happier circumstances would have been a delicious smoothness, into death's vast and vaulted antechamber, where still he bides, in a state of conscious but incommunicate ataraxia, poised upon the point of oblivion.[16]

[14] According to Lyotard, the postmodern is a condition of "incredulity toward metanarratives", and a metanarrative is "a discourse of legitimation with respect to its own status" (Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition,* xxiv and xxiii respectively.

[15] L. Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 12.

[16] J. Banville, *The Infinities,* p. 17.

This scene sets the mood for the rest of the novel. Humour, of the scatological type, is at play here together with the contrast between register and content, and the logic of ironic inversions that, according to Hutcheon, characterises parody. The elevated tone, the educated strain in the lexicon and the use of poetic devices such as alliterations or similes contrast with the *nature* of the event described to create an effect similar to that of the mock-heroic. What should have been a climatic and elegant farewell scene for the hero of mathematics and quantum physics becomes a transgression of the rules of the characterisation of the master which, in carnivalesque fashion,[17] articulates a Wexfordian burlesque that stages the descent of the ruler. Old Adam's body is literally upside-down, an image that also denounces the fact that he bought the manor, at a scrawny price, from Ivy Blount, last descendant of the original owners of Arden House, thus legitimacy becomes one of the defied notions in the text. Furthermore, the novel also mocks readers who had been made to believe that this work subscribed to the conventions of a big house novel while, in fact, it ridicules the pretensions of both a lifestyle and a writing mode that are no longer operative. Like the historian in *The Newton Letter* (1982), we realise we may have misread many of the hints in the text.

The episode of the bathroom 'catastrophe' foreshadows other inversions in the rewriting of literary conventions and my second example from the novel is related to the seduction scenes. In *God's Gift* (2000), Banville follows previous versions and locates the main seduction scene (this is Jupiter seducing Minna/Alcmene) upstairs, while Mercury's exchanges with servants take place downstairs, thus "negotiating high and low levels familiar with Shakespearean comedy".[18] However, in *The Infinities*, the first seduction scene (this time Zeus seducing Helen/Alcmene) takes place downstairs, and Hermes' seduction of Ivy (a doubling of the previous one) takes place in the cottage by the edge of the manor: all carnal exchanges are brought down to ground level, in a celebration of things human, even if the gods are taking part in the feasting. This series of displacements (from

[17] See the dethronement of the Lord of Winter in Bakhtin's, and Eco's analysis of carnival and the parodic. For Eco, "the comic effect is realized when […] there is the violation of a rule [and] we in some way welcome the violation; we are, so to speak, revenged by the comic character who has challenged the repressive power of the rule […]. This definition of comic leads us to the idea of carnival. How do we succeed in finding situations in which we are not concerned by the rules? Naturally enough (as an entire ethnological and artistic tradition witnesses) by establishing an upside-down world (*monde renversé*) […] At this point, we feel *free*, first for sadistic reasons […] and second, because we are liberated from the fear imposed by the existence of the rule (which produces anxiety). Comic pleasure means enjoying the murder of the father, provided that others, less human than ourselves, commit the crime" (Umberto Eco, "The Frames of Comic 'Freedom'", p. 2.)
[18] H. Friberg-Harnesk, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

upstairs to downstairs, from manor to cottage) coincides with the descent movement or the dethroning mentioned before, but they might still look like a conservative scenario in terms of social divisions, except for the fact that Hermes' impersonation of Duffy the cowman to seduce Ivy will bring further consequences with it: it is insinuated that Duffy will marry the rightful owner of the house, and will move to the cottage,[19] which may be read as an advance of the peasantry upon the big house world that would invert the outcome of the Battle of Vinegar Hill, which was the historical context Banville used for his play. This parodic inversion with a political intent is complemented by a further elaboration on Shakespearean intertextuality that relates to the third but frustrated seduction scene at the heart of the mysterious forest in *The Infinities*, where Zeus, this time, impersonates Roddy Wagstaff and makes erotic advances upon Helen, but is violently rejected. This episode may be read as a disruption of binary pairs, as a parodic rewriting of *Midsummer Night's Dream* inside a reshaping of Kleist's and Banville's plays, and as one more way in which the novel reproduces the dynamics of multiverses, in this case, literary ones.

The previous accumulation of embedded literary worlds implies a degree of sacrifice in terms of autonomy for the novel to be beautifully consistent with the mathematical notion of the infinity. It also demands from readers a literary competence or decoding abilities on which a good deal of the transformative and comic effects of the hypertext depend. The pursuit of such literary goals reminds us that parody "is one of the techniques of self-referentiality by which art reveals its awareness of the context-dependent nature of meaning, of the importance to signification of the circumstances surrounding any utterance".[20] In this sense, although postmodern parodies have sometimes been accused of literary elitism, their accumulative references mainly represent a radical subversion of the idea of naturalness in art and, at the same time, they maintain cultural continuity or what was described in this article as an ironic dialogue with the past.

For Genette, a hypertext "is invested with a meaning that is autonomous and thus in some manner sufficient. But sufficient does not mean exhaustive. In every hypertext there is an *ambiguity* [that] is precisely caused by the fact that a hypertext can be read both for itself and in its relation to its hypotext",[21] which means that the rewritten text is gram-

[19] This is foreshadowed in the way Hermes/Duffy uses the phrase "'[t]he future'" in his proposal speech. *Vid*. J. Banville, *The Infinities*, p. 82.
[20] L. Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, p. 85.
[21] G. Genette, *op. cit.*, p. 397.

matically or semantically autonomous, but "no one can claim to have exhausted its function without having perceived and enjoyed it"[22] as a transformation, in the case of a parody, of the previous work(s). The beauty of this hypertextual ambiguity consists in, according to Genette, the capacity to generate "more complex and more savory objects than those that are 'made on purpose'; a new function is superimposed upon and interwoven with an older structure, and the dissonance between these two concurrent elements imparts its flavour to the resulting whole".[23] Thence, for Genette, a rewriting invites readers to engage in a palimpsestuous or relational reading, one in which the hypertext legitimately wishes this relation to be evident. Even more in the case of a novel such as *The Infinities*, where this relational condition, this interconnectedness, is a textual illumination of the experience of a mathematical model of the universe(s) as a series of infinites, and where the text acknowledges the fact that its condition as a hypertext is temporal, as it may itself be rewritten and thus become one more of the hypotexts in a series of literary infinities.

To come back to and further expand the idea of parodic inversions, I will move to a third example, which may be referred to as the lunch episode in the novel. By this time most characters are downstairs, at an earthly level, and a pseudo-formal lunch is to be held. Ivy, already emotionally engaged with Duffy, invites him to have lunch with the family and guests, which again breaks with the unwritten laws of the house and turns Duffy into a (not quite willing) Banvillean reshaping of the figure of the interloper. The lunch episode becomes a second (or third) dethroning, this time that of young Adam, who is unaware of the fact that his wife was seduced and impregnated by Zeus earlier that morning and whose role as the heir of the manor is now being challenged by Duffy's presence. Just like in the narration of the bathroom catastrophe, the language here recreates the imagery of epic poetry, which contrasts with the domesticity of the event. The lunch passage is articulated as a parodic rendering of a battle scene, where the tensions between the gentry and the peasantry are staged. Throughout the day, young Adam has had reveries of himself as a classical warrior: "He tries to picture himself, in breastplate and bronze helmet, heaving a huge sword, the sweat in his eyes and a blood mist everywhere, horses screaming and the cries of the dying all around him";[24] and when lunch starts, he "sharpens the carving knife, wreathing blade and steel about

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 398.
[23] *Idem.*
[24] J. Banville, *The Infinities*, p. 185.

each other at flashing speed, as if he were demonstrating a feat of swordsmanship".[25] But once Duffy arrives, these images are comically reduced to a depiction of his carving of a chicken described as "irritatingly slow" and "methodical".[26] So much for the Godley's *areté*. Finally, young Adam's puzzlement and partial acceptance of defeat is represented in the action of his placing a drumstick on Duffy's plate.

Banville also takes advantage of this battle scene with classical echoes to make even more evident the presence of divinities and their interference with human affairs, as well as to strain verisimilitude in the novel. In the lunch sequence, feasting being one of his favourite pastimes, Pan plays a central role, though this is a divine entity absent from *God's Gift* or Kleist's *Amphitryon*, and a third party not even Zeus or Hermes were counting on. His presence among human characters in the novel takes the form of a Benny Grace, who literally appears out of the blue. Despite his human disguise, he is not too concerned about showing "those goatish hoofs of his",[27] an element of the extraordinary that the rest of characters accept as a regular thing, confirming the non-mimetic aesthetics of the text. During the lunch scene, Pan/Benny reveals one of the most important pieces of information in the story: old Adam will not die. This creates a commotion amidst several family members, not to mention Hermes who is tremendously resentful of his peer. Benny's intervention is the force that precipitates the happy ending of this comic work, but the novel does not submit easily to formal coherence, this is, to the conventions of comedy writing. The ending incorporates a *deus ex machina*, a strategy familiar to classical comedies, but does it in such a peculiar way that it becomes a parody of the strategy itself: "It is true that to make a happy ending one must stop short of the end",[28] and "[t]hey shall be happy, all of them".[29] These are some of the sentences that introduce what might be described as a sophisticated collection of partial endings that turns into an exposure of its own artificiality, a device that reinforces the metanarrative elements in the novel as it exhibits the craftsmanship of literary creation, both unsettling the attempt at unifying coherence and enhancing the importance of the art of writing as a theme in the novel.

Finally, a fourth and last aspect related to humour and the aesthetics of postmodern parody will be discussed here. I mentioned before that

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 197.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 203.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 177.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 293.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

Hermes is presented in this novel as a main narrator whose omniscience is reinforced by his condition as a god. However, what might look like the utmost embodiment of a Banvillean all too knowing and central narrative voice is gradually restricted to the point that there are several episodes when Hermes is not given an access to conversations held by other characters or to some events in the story as he has been busy doing something else or has simply fallen asleep, as he confesses at the beginning of part III, with the humorous comment: "I am getting as dopily drowsy as my old Dad".[30] These restrictions to his omniscience are combined with gradual displacements of his vocal function that partially delegate the previous responsibility to old Adam who, for a time, becomes the narrator in the story without Hermes filtering his discourse. The more old Adam takes over the narration, the more human perspective on existence becomes as authoritative as that of the gods, and this strategy contributes to the effect of heterogeneity in the novel. But this is not simply a substitution of one authority by another: none of them are reliable narrators, as it is expressed in the ambiguous sentence shared by Hermes: "only sometimes am I omniscient",[31] or in old Adam's repeated complaints about not being able to remember things clearly, as well as the inaccurate historical references included in his discourse. Such references are intended to be identified as inaccurate by readers, and constitute one more of the literary strategies in the text to prove not only the fallibility of human memory but also that historiography is articulated by narrative remains that are always partial and subject to interpretation.

To add an extra layer of complexity to the alternation of narrative voices in the novel, Hermes and Adam do not only take turns to narrate, but there are moments when their narrative identities are juxtaposed in the same paragraph, with almost no textual marker to distinguish one form the other, as in the following example:

> I have left Benny stalled there in the middle of that room, with the evening light eclipsed and rain coming. He is on his way to me, and in no hurry. Let him loiter, there is time enough, I am going nowhere, not yet. I feel suddenly a sad fondness for him, poor unlovely outcast creature, as I felt earlier for my son —I must be softening, here at the end. Benny is a solitary, we have that too in common.[32]

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 177.
[31] *Ibid.*, 188.
[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 262-263.

The "I" at the beginning of the paragraph corresponds to Hermes, but the "I" in "as I felt earlier for my son" definitely belongs to old Adam. In between, a territory of discursive ambiguity has been created, where the sentences could be attributed to any of the two narrative voices in question. Here we witness a lack of stability in relation to the theme of identity which mirrors that of Amphitryon in the different versions of his story, though this variation includes the identity of a god *fusing* with that of a human being in linguistic and ontological terms, and not simply because of the deliberate adoption of a temporary disguise to fool mortals. In an address to Helen by the end of the novel, Hermes, forgetting himself, says: "For nature, my dear, has no purpose, except perhaps that of not being us, I mean you".[33] Hermes incurs in a language slippage and uses the pronoun "us" as if he were a human being, which is particularly telling because he has shown, more than once, that he is trying hard and not successfully to remain a unified narrative voice or subject. For him, this is a dangerous blurring of borderlines that exhibits identity as a vulnerable construct, that proves the contaminating effects of parody and even denounces a fascination with some aspects of human existence, though he is not willing to accept so. Like our notions on nature, identity, if anything at all, is an unending exercise in interpretation.

Linda Hutcheon insists on a definition of postmodern art as a creative practise that operates according to the dynamics of paradoxes. When it comes to parody, she states that "the paradox of postmodern parody is *not* essentially depthless, trivial kitsch [as it has been called by other theorists] but rather that it can and does lead to a vision of interconnectedness: 'illuminating itself, the artwork simultaneously casts light on the workings of aesthetic conceptualization and on art's sociological situation'".[34] Genette expresses a similar idea when he declares that the pleasure of parody is related to the fact that hypertexts are also types of games, a "tinkering" with texts that processes and uses an object "in an unforeseen, unprogrammed, and thus 'unlawful' manner".[35] In this sense, parody is an irreverent "compound [...] of seriousness and playfulness (lucidity and ludicity), of intellectual achievement and entertainment".[36] In other words, a paradoxical form of humour that toys with ironic trans-contextualisation and inversions which, as every other game, "entai[l] some degree of perver-

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 254.
[34] Russell *apud* Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 24.
[35] G. Genette, *op. cit.*, p. 399.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 400.

sion".[37] In *The Infinities*, Banville rewrites several literary traditions, and uses the strategies of postmodern parody to foreground an *ars poetica* that is self-referential and metanarrative, but also aware of the power of laughter to destabilise cultural assumptions, be it in terms of literary heritage or in relation to other types of totalizing narratives. Multiple universes, the instability of the selves and the eccentric condition of human beings are all explored in *The Infinities*, an ambitious and imaginative comedy where, paradoxically, gods describe mortals as creatures with a "defective imagination",[38] except in the case of old Adam and, I would add, in that of John Banville, whose ability to reimagine a contemporary Amphitryon resonates with a dethronement of conservative definitions of originality.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 399.
[38] J. Banville, *The Infinities*, p. 37.

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Writing(s) and Rewriting(s). Double and Multiple Traditions in the Fiction of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne

Giovanna Tallone

One of the most sensitive and resonant voices in contemporary Irish writing, Éilís Ní Dhuibhne has always been in dialogue with tradition in a variety of ways throughout her long career. Moving along different modes of writing, from short fiction to novels, from poetry to drama, from scholarly work in folklore to TV scripts and children's books, Ní Dhuibhne also moves between different language codes as a bilingual writer writing both in English and Irish. Such linguistic choice is indicative of her sense of belonging to the double identity embedded in the Irish historical and social context, and her fiction looks back at the past at the same time reflecting on the conditions and contradictions of contemporary Ireland.

Notably, her fiction is often tightly intertwined with her work as a professional folklorist in terms of plot, imagery, text and intertextuality. Her scholarly work covers a diversity of topics and subjects, from the analysis of folklore texts and medieval literary sources, to the presence of folklore in Anglo-Irish literature, to the pioneering Urban Folklore Project in the 1980s. Her work as a folklorist is never disjointed from storytelling thus involving "the nature of narrative creativity" and a reflection on the tradition of storytelling and storytellers acts as a *fil rouge*

in her writing.[1] Ní Dhuibhne makes a very personal and original use of folklore in her fiction rewriting and reimagining it, translating in a way a traditional story into its modern counterpart through intertextual juxtaposition. As Anne Fogarty suggests, Ní Dhuibhne's writing thus highlights the "divergences and continuities between tradition and modernity".[2]

In the same way as Ní Dhuibhne's academic work in folklore looks at the Irish context in relation to an international perspective, she takes into account an Irish literary tradition as well as a wider European tradition of which she is very much aware and which appears in her writing in terms of reference, implicit quotation, intertextuality and postmodern rewriting and remake.

The purpose of this article is to examine the way in which Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's pervasive use of the native Irish tradition merges with the wider spectrum of European tradition —or traditions— in terms of intertextuality, imagery and plot at large. Though reference will be made to her novels in English, attention will be especially given to some of her short stories, a literary genre Ní Dhuibhne finds particularly suitable for her mode of writing. Their compression, flexibility and malleability respond to the writer's lifelong obsession with storytelling and to her need to rework the past to speak about the present in new ways and different forms. Short stories offer Ní Dhuibhne a form in which to experiment with language and structure and make the text a depository for women's history, to elaborate, among others, on metanarrative and self-referential aspects, and to reflect on the art of writing. Notably, interlacing different traditions beyond the borders of the Irish local tradition turns into an act of research on one hand, and a stimulating source for creativity on the other.

In her first novel *The Bray House* published in 1990 Ní Dhuibhne imagines a dystopian future in which Ireland has been wiped away by nuclear disaster. Here she plays with literary genres —dystopia and science fiction, travel writing, fictionalised autobiography, scientific reports, journalistic prose— introducing an ecological message to speak about the future in order to discuss the present. However, in an early analysis of the novel, Carol Morris pointed out its "conscious literariness" in the multiple references to traditional literary works.[3] Implicit references to Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the novels by Swedish Nobel Prize-winner Selma Lagerlof, and Samuel Richardson's

[1] Anne O'Connor, "With Her Whole Heart: Éilís Ní Dhuibhne and Irish Folklore", p. 272.
[2] Anne Fogarty, "Preface", p. xi.
[3] Carol Morris, "*The* Bray House: an Irish Critical Utopia. Éilís Ní Dhuibhne", p. 136.

Pamela, are counterbalanced by open statements about Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* and Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, thus highlighting the novel's conscious intertextuality and Ní Dhuibhne's preoccupation and experimentation with form. The tradition of fairy tales is evident when the stories of the Little Match Girl and of Rapunzel are mentioned,[4] while the encounter with Maggie Byrne, the only survivor of the disaster, is an echo of the folklore changeling tradition.

The complex interweaving of the European literary traditions underlying *The Bray House* shifts to a more local perspective in the 1999 novel *The Dancers Dancing*, in which the Irish past is updated in the context of Irish College in the Gaeltaght. Here Ní Dhuibhne exploits the tradition of the *Bildungsoman* setting the development of Orla and her friends in Donegal in 1972. As Ríona Ní Congáil and Máirín Nic Eoin point out, "the dramatic potential of the Irish college as a site of maturation"[5] is successfully exploited in a narrative meant "to reveal traces of darker histories that persist into the present".[6] In fact, as in the archaeological construction of *The Bray House*, the landscape of Donegal in *The Dancers Dancing* hides "a very dark side of Irish history and culture",[7] namely the baby skulls Orla bumps into in the burn are a visual marker of infanticide: "Skulls. Half a dozen, a dozen, small round white skulls".[8] As Christine St. Peter suggests, Ní Dhuibhne's appropriates the realistic and metaphorical details to "focus on specifically female experience" thus "re-writing or re-inventing women's history".[9]

Ní Dhuibhne's occasionally exploits a variation of the technique of intertextuality following the postmodern trend of "writing over" classics, whose plots, characters and situations are recast in present day Ireland. Thus the relationship between the pre-text and the aftertext is of transposition, as —to recall Lubomir Doležel— it "preserves the design and the main story of the protoworld but locates them in a different temporal or spatial setting".[10] Though the most notable example is the 2007 novel *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*, a self-conscious 21st-century version of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, some short stories can also be considered remakes of traditional or classic literary texts, and in some of them Ní Dhuibhne takes

[4] Éilís Ní Dhuibhne, *The Bray House*, p. 144, p. 93.
[5] Ríona Ní Congáil and Máirín Nic Eoin Cliona. "Writing in Irish, 1900-2013", p. 346.
[6] Susan Cahill, "Celtic Tiger Fiction", p. 430.
[7] Christine St. Peter, "Negotiating the Boundaries. An Interview with Éilís Ní Dhuibhne", p. 71.
[8] É. N. Dhuibhne, *The Dancers Dancing*, p. 202.
[9] C. St. Peter*, op. cit.*, p. 73.
[10] Lubomir Doležel, *Heterocosmica. Fiction and Possible Worlds*, p. 206.

the opportunity to focus on the dynamic between writing and rewriting and to cast attention on the text's own self-reflexiveness.

In *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*, generally considered to be Ní Dhuibhne's Celtic Tiger novel, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* is recast in Ireland in the 21st century in terms of plot, characters, situations, and the world of St. Petersburg high society is replaced by the Dublin literary intelligentsia, while balls and parties are supplanted by book launches and literary events. Parallelisms are clear in the reworking of characters' names that consciously reproduce the protagonists of Tolstoy's novel. Both protagonists are called Anna and their husbands Alex/Alexei. Alex, the rich financial expert, is the Irish counterpart of the civil servant Alexei Alexandrovich Karenin. Anna becomes the lover of Vincy Erikson, who like Count Alexei Kirillovich Vronsky in *Anna Karenina* is always at the centre of social events and also attracts Kate Murphy, the counterpart of Kitty, princess Shcherbatsky. Stiva Oblonsky, Anna Karenina's brother, has had an affair with a French governess just as Gerry, Anna Kelly's brother, has had one with the Swedish au pair. Leo Kavanagh is an idealistic outsider who lives in Kerry just as Konstantin Levin lives in the country, and his name is also a conscious reminder of Tolstoy's first name, who wanted Levin to be his *alter ego*.

Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow exploits the Russian literary tradition, also intertextually incorporating echoes of Yeats, Keats and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, as well as Irish local lore. This is meant to draw attention to writing and literary creativity, which represents a significant focus in the novel (Anna Kelly is a writer of children's books), even on a basic economic level in order to present literature as "commodity".[11] *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* is rich in intertextual references. Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* is obviously the most evident and most important intertext and pretext for Ní Dhuibhne's rewriting, which comes to the fore in direct and indirect quotations from *Anna Karenina* and in the paratextuality of the epigraphs introducing the novel, direct quotations from Part Seven, Chapter XXIII and Part Eight, Chapter XI. Notably, the famous opening of Tolstoy's novel —"All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way"[12]— is playfully and self-consciously rewritten and transformed in *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* at the beginning of Chapter Seventeen, roughly half-way through the novel: "All happy families are happy in different ways, and unhappy families are also unhappy

[11] S. Cahill, *op. cit.*, p. 435.
[12] Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, p. 1.

in different ways, but at Christmas they are particularly unhappy, and mostly in the same way".[13]

Interestingly, Ní Dhuibhne follows Tolstoy's organizational structure in *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow* which is based on episodic chapters, each focusing on one of the protagonists in turn, just like *Anna Karenina*. Thus the narrative is laid out in what can be considered self-contained stories, which represents a form of continuity in Ní Dhuibhne's production, in that the novel resembles the organisation of a collection of short stories.

As a matter of fact, Ní Dhuibhne's preference for the form and structure of the short story as a literary genre allows her a great freedom of experimentation both in the Irish and the international tradition. In particular, her background in folklore represents a substantial source of working on what is at the same time local and international, and Ní Dhuibhne exploits traditional stories in a very personal and innovative way, especially in terms of original writing, rewriting and remake.

Her experimentation with old legends can be traced back to her 1988 short story "Midwife to the Fairies", a postmodern rewriting of a migratory legend common to different areas in Europe,[14] published in her first collection *Blood and Water*. Here a midwife is taken by the fairies to assist a fairy woman in labour. The juxtaposition between an old legend and its contemporary counterpart, graphically rendered by two different types, creates a "double-levelled structure" in that the contemporary story retells the old one in a realistic 20th-century setting.[15] The midwife of the title is called by "a young fellow with black hair",[16] an updated variant of the "man standing at the door with a mare" in the original legend.[17] The mare is replaced by "an old Cortina … a real farmer's car".[18] The journey leads the midwife to a house "buried ... at the side of the road, in a kind of hollow", a coreferent to the hill of the world of the fairies.[19] The woman later discovers the baby girl she has helped to be born has been abandoned and has died. Thus Ní Dhuibhne links an old traditional legend to a contemporary case of infanticide.[20] Rather than simply rewriting an old story, Ní Dhuibhne creates a text in which pretext and aftertext are intertwined and coexist.

[13] É. N. Dhuibhne, *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*, p. 201.
[14] Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, "Midwife to the Fairies (ML 5070). The Irish Variants in Their Scottish and Scandinavian Perspective", p. 133.
[15] A. Fogarty, *op. cit.*, p. xi.
[16] É. N. Dhuibhne, *Blood and Water*, p. 29.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[20] C. St. Peter, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

Likewise, in the story "The Mermaid Legend" from the 1991 collection *Eating Women is not Recommended* Ní Dhuibhne alternates a folk version of the selkie legend, "a shapeshifter between seal and human form",[21] with the tale told by an unnamed woman in an English pub. The original story is graphically rendered in italics and interlaces with its counterpart in which cross-references provide modern contextualization to traditional motifs.

In the 1997 collection *The Inland Ice* the structural organization is based on a rewriting of the traditional tale "The Story of the Little White Goat", here entitled "The Search for the Lost Husband", a feminist retelling of the traditional story in which a young girl falls in love and then goes to live with a white goat who turns into a man at night. According to Elke D'hoker, "Ní Dhuibhne tries to blend the ancient folktale tradition with postmodern themes and styles".[22] Told in parts interspersed among the thirteen stories of the collection, "The Search for the Lost Husband" provides thematic unity and a thematic background for the stories in the "opposition between (a) self-destructive passion" and "a more pragmatic, friendly kind of love" which characterizes "The Search".[23]

The collection shows an interesting development in the exploitation of European tradition in the story "The Woman with the Fish", which in a way anticipates the remake of *Anna Karenina* in *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*. In fact, the story is a conscious rewriting of Anton Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog" and in *The Inland Ice* the choice is consistent with the various modern counterparts of the protagonist of "The Search for the Lost Husband", whose overpowering emotions make them defenceless. Implicitly, as for Tolstoy in *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*, Ní Dhuibhne gives an open tribute to the Russian master of the short story in a reworking of Chekhov's perhaps best-known story in the different context of the 20th century.

The title of the story openly recalls Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog" —first published in 1899— and textual parallelisms in Ní Dhuibhne's rewriting are clear in names, plot, situations and imagery. In Chekhov's "The Lady with the Dog", a forty-year-old man named Dmitri Gurov is intrigued by a young woman walking along the sea front of Yalta with her small Pomeranian dog. Their acquaintance soon turns into a love affair, which gives rise to a sense of guilt in the lady, Anna Sergeyevna. Dmitri has often been unfaithful to his wife, feeling a sense of superiority to what

[21] Maureen O'Connor, *The Female and the Species. The Animal in Irish Women's Writing*, p. 153.
[22] Elke D'hoker, "The Postmodern Folktales of Éilís Ní Dhuibhne", p. 133.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

he calls "the lower race" of women.[24] Yet, Anna's freshness, "the diffidence, the angularity of inexperienced youth" enhance his desire.[25] When called back by her husband to her hometown, Anna is relieved, "It's a good thing I am going away […] It's the finger of destiny!".[26] Back in Moscow, Dmitri expects Anna to disappear from his mind and memories as it had happened with his previous lovers, and yet Anna haunts him so much that he decides to visit her in her unspecified hometown. The story concludes with Anna's visits to Moscow and the strain she feels living this relationship contrasts with Dmitri's contentedness with the way things are, disconcerted about the implications of falling in love for the first time.

In "The Woman with the Fish", Éilís Ní Dhuibhne reworks the pattern of Chekhov's story setting it in the English department of a university institution in Ireland in present times. The opening of "The Lady with the Dog" sheds light on the rumours surrounding the lady: "It was said that a new person had appeared on the seafront: a lady with a little dog",[27] which Ní Dhuibhne contracts and simplifies as "[a] new woman had come to work in the English department, replacing Maggie, who was on maternity leave".[28] The shift from "lady" to "woman" suits the modern context and anticipates the areas of research of both protagonists. In fact, Michael, the *alter ego* of Dmitri Gurov, is working on a Ph.D. "on Irish women poets of the nineteenth century" which is similar to Anna's field on research:[29] an article of hers on Forgotten Women is mentioned early on in the story.[30]

Both protagonists are called Anna —an echo[31] and a multiple intertextual reminder of Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*— and both married names have German origins. Anna Sergeyevna's husband's surname is Von Diderits, though she is unsure about its origin: "I believe his grandfather was a German, but he is an Orthodox Russian himself".[32] In "The Woman with the Fish", Éilís Ní Dhuibhne keeps the detail as close as possible to the original giving the indirect quotation the form of Michael's free indirect speech: "Muller. His grandfather had been German, she thought. Thought! She did not even know for sure. That was typical of her".[33] Though proclaiming

[24] Anton Chekhov, *The Lady with the Dog*, p. 8.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[28] É. N. Dhuibhne, *The Inland Ice*, p. 220.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 221.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 224.
[31] James N. Loehlin, *The Cambridge Introduction to Chekhov*, p. 99.
[32] A. Chekhov, *op. cit.*, p. 22
[33] É. N. Dhuibhne, *The Inland Ice*, p. 231.

himself a feminist,[34] Michael is quite dismissive of Anna's emotional reactions, thus resembling Dmitri Gurov, a great womanizer, "a serial adulterer"[35] who prefers the company of women to that of men, and yet "views women contemptuously".[36] Likewise, Michael has a sort of paternalistic attitude to women and to Anna in particular, a variant of Gurov's consideration of female inferiority.

Parallelisms between the two stories involve the age of the male protagonists, like Gurov Michael is "barely forty",[37] both of them have a daughter and two younger boys and both have a sort of dismissive attitude towards their wives; Dmitri considers his wife "unintelligent, narrow, inelegant",[38] traits that are shared by Maureen, whom Michael loves but is also ashamed of, avoiding to bring her to "social functions" as "he did not like to parade his wife in front of the other university wives, who were all size tens with glossy ashen coiffures".[39] The details of the physical description of both Annas highlight the stories' implicit intertextual layers. Anna Sergeyevna is "a fair-haired young lady of medium height, wearing a *béret*";[40] Anna Muller is "small and fair-haired" and wears "a large blue beret, made of thick stodgy felt and resembling a chanterelle in shape", later referred to as "the mushroom hat".[41]

Repeatedly mentioned in both stories, this piece of garment is a polymorphic signifier. Berets are worn as part of the uniform of many military and police units worldwide and are part of the long-standing stereotype of the intellectual, film director, artist, poet, or bohemian. It is also historically a revolutionary symbol, as worn by Che Guevara, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, the ETA guerrillas, but also by Guardian Angels, unarmed anti-crime citizen patrol units originated in New York in the 1970s to discourage crime in streets and subways. Thus, if Anna Sergeyevna wears her *béret* as a fashionable item, this also provides a potential yet useless kind of protection from the budding sexual experience with Dmitri. Likewise, Anna Muller's distinctive beret is a mark of her uniqueness, and in both cases this garment of protection should imply a form of revolution the female protagonists cannot enact, as they both fall victims of their respective lovers.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 226.
[35] J. N. Loehlin, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
[36] *Idem.*
[37] É. N. Dhuibhne, *The Inland Ice*, p. 222.
[38] A. Chekhov, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
[39] É. N. Dhuibhne, *The Inland Ice*, p. 223.
[40] A. Chekhov, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
[41] É. N. Dhuibhne, *The Inland Ice*, p. 221.

The motif of communication and non-communication (or miscommunication) or of interruption in communication is of particular importance throughout Chekhov's stories and characters simply fail to understand one another's point of view. In "The Lady with the Dog" Gurov realizes that he cannot communicate with his friends or his wife. In particular, when overwhelmed by his Yalta memories, he tries to share his feelings with a friend:

> One evening, coming out of the doctor's club with an official with whom he had been playing cards, he could not resist saying:
> "If only you knew what a fascinating woman I made the acquaintance of in Yalta!"
> The official got into his sledge and was driving away, but turned suddenly and shouted:
> "Dmitri Dmitrich!"
> "What?"
> "You were right this evening: the sturgeon was a bit too strong!"[42]

In this "exchange, mixing the transcendent and the grossly mundane",[43] Gurov's reaction is one of "indignation", he dismisses these manners as "savage"[44] and as an offence to his oblique and implicit expression of feeling. Ní Dhuibhne reworks or translates the episode of the sturgeon setting it in the world of academic intelligentsia as Michael, eager to reveal something about Anna Muller, casually but also deliberately mentions her academic work. Here the banality of sturgeon is replaced by the banality of crisps:

> "Did you read that piece by Anna Muller in Hibernian Studies last month? On the deconstruction of quotidian discourse among females."

One of his companions, a medievalist, shook his head. The other, who specialised in Swift, said no.

> "It was so original in its thinking. She's an excellent scholar, isn't she?"
> "I love these salt and vinegar crisps," said the Swift scholar. He munched loudly and the pungent smell of salt and vinegar and other crisps flavourings flooded the air. "I've always loved them ever since they came out. …"
> Michael […] felt nauseated. He stood up. "I'm off". [45]

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne reproduces the pattern of Chekhov's story in Anna's emotional reaction as both Annas cry in front of their lovers. And both

[42] A. Chekhov, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
[43] J. N. Loehlin, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
[44] A. Chekhov, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
[45] É. N. Dhuibhne, *The Inland Ice*, p. 232.

Dmitri and Michael see themselves in the mirror in their last encounter with Anna. This is a significant symbol as Dimitri sees himself and realises that the seducer has really fallen in love for the first time. What he sees in the mirror changes his view as he sees himself for who he really is in a sort of epiphany and is then able to see the impact of the relationship. Looking at himself in the mirror "Gurov reflects on the superficiality of his past affairs".[46] The mirror is a traditional symbol of physical and spiritual reflection, and as a literary device it is an intricate representation of identity and self-consciousness, and in the case of Dmitri and Michael it enhances their personal crisis. "His hair was already beginning to turn grey. And it seemed strange to him that he should have grown so much older, so much plainer during the last few years".[47] Éilís Ní Dhuibhne translates the scene in a process of expansion. In fact, she enlarges the picture Michael has of himself in the mirror enhancing the focus on his hair as a sign of incipient decay Michael would prefer to keep at bay. The first glimpse of his receding hair is very close to Chekhov's use of the image: "He [...] caught sight of himself in the mirror. His hair had been falling out more rapidly than usual over the past week, thanks to the stress. It had receded noticeably, and the grey hairs were becoming very numerous".[48] The image is doubled in a short sentence marked by the repetition of the conjunction 'and'; a stylistic choice that enhances the fast passing of time and Michael's sudden discovery of his real feelings: "And now when his hair was receding and he was fat and forty he was in love for the first time".[49]

It should be borne in mind, however, that both the little Pomeranian dog in Chekhov and the fish in Ní Dhuibhne are silent witnesses of the love relationships, yet Ní Dhuibhne gives the pet fish a greater prominence, and his death in his bowl is a coreferent to the end of the relationship. Interestingly, the fish is called Anton, an oblique textual reference to Anton Chekhov himself, which emphasises the intertextual layers of the story. The conclusion resembles Chekhov's and the final line is taken nearly verbatim from the original: "All he knew was that the most complicated part was just beginning".[50]

And yet, while Chekhov sounds more positive and optimistic, Ní Dhuibhne casts attention on Anna who "would have to take the consequences",[51]

[46] J. N. Loehlin, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
[47] A. Chekhov, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
[48] É. N. Dhuibhne, *The Inland Ice*, p. 232.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 234.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 235.
[51] *Idem.*

consistently following and respecting the organizational structure of *The Inland Ice* and the thematic unity of "The Search for the Lost Husband". Namely, the complexity of the relationship is highlighted by the triple repetition of the word "end" ("Michael saw that … it would end"; "It would all have to end"; "But the end was too far away")[52] which creates a stylistic contrast with the "beginning" that marks the open conclusion of the story. As in "The Lady with the Little Dog", "[t]he story does not really end".[53]

The implicit presence and absence of Anton Chekhov continues in Ní Dhuibhne's story "Summer's Wreath", published in the collection *Town and Country* edited by Kevin Barry in 2013. Here, Chekhov's name is constantly in-between the lines, while other writers like "Guy de Maupassant, Edgar Allan Poe, Turgenev" are mentioned as masters of the short story.[54] Unlike "The Woman with the Fish", "Summer's Wreath" is not a remake strictly speaking, rather Ní Dhuibhne plays with the biographical details of a specific moment in Katherine Mansfield's life to reconstruct the background that led to the composition of her first book *In a German Pension*, a book whose stories "reflect the progressive maturity of an artist".[55]

The story is in the first person and opens *in medias res*: "Next thing, I was pregnant",[56] a one-sentence paragraph that is consistent with Ní Dhuibhne stylistic choices in narrative. Ní Dhuibhne seems to pay a tribute to another master of the short story in the European and international tradition, which is embedded in the title and in the multiple possible uses of a wreath, a decorative garland but also a memorial or a sign of honour or victory. All this seems to merge in the story, in which curiously no mention is made of the summer's wreath of the title, thus leaving the polymorphic object undisclosed.

The opening reference to pregnancy casts a direct connection to Katherine Mansfield's biography. In early June 1909 Mansfield, pregnant with her lover Garnet Trowell, was settled by her mother in Bad Wörishofen, in Bavaria. The place was famous for the "cold water cure", which for Annie Beauchamp was a drastic attempt to control her daughter's "sexual proclivities".[57] Mansfield's experiences in Bavaria remain "partly conjectural",[58] but provided her with "material for stories simply by looking around"[59]

[52] *Idem.*
[53] J. N. Loehlin, *op. cit.,* p. 102.
[54] É. N. Dhuibhne, "Summer's Wreath", p. 138.
[55] Patrick D. Morrow, *Katherine's Mansfield's Fiction*, p. 28.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[57] Gillian Boddy, *Katherine Mansfield. The Woman and the Writer*, p. 40.
[58] ClaireTomalin, *Katherine Mansfield. A Secret Life*, p. 70.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

and the pension Müller "became the German Pension of her first book".[60] It was here that Mansfield had a miscarriage and lost her baby and it was here that she met and later had a love affair with the Polish intellectual Floryan Sobieniowski, who introduced her to the work of Anton Chekhov.

Mansfield's biographer Claire Tomalin states that "in a work of fiction, the part played by Floryan in Katherine's life would appear so extraordinary and melodramatic that one might shrug it off as improbable. In a biography, the problem is one of documentation".[61]

In "Summer's Wreath" Ní Dhuibhne takes up Tomalin's implicit challenge and creatively plays with biographical details to shed light on issues of creativity and writing which had obsessed Mansfield throughout her life and which constantly recur as a *fil rouge* also in Ní Dhuibhne's fiction. Interestingly, when settling down in the Hotel Kreutzer in Bad Wörishofen, Mansfield "signed herself in unabashedly as Käthe Beauchamp-Bowden, *Schriftstellerin* (i.e. woman writer)".[62] Ní Dhuibhne reworks this detail having her protagonist repeat "I'm writing a book",[63] "I wanted to impress him [Floryan], I said I was writing a book",[64] "I'd started a novel but at that moment, talking to him in the warm dark inn, I decided to turn the novel into a short story".[65] This is consistent with Ní Dhuibhne's concern with writing and creativity that underlies her fiction in short stories featuring writers such as "Estonia, "The Man Who had no Story" and in *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*.

Being a conscious work of fiction, biographical details are not necessarily precise and exact and are modified to emphasise the author's concern with the issue of writing and the self-consciousness of a text that is not a biography but a free and imaginary account. For example, the protagonist and first-person narrator's name is disclosed only half-way through the story as Kathleen,[66] that is Mansfield's original name, and the reader's awareness of her identity occurs when the text-within-the-text of a letter of acceptance of the short story "The Child Who Was Tired" is addressed to "Dear Miss Mansfield".[67]

As an alternative to Bad Wörishofen, Ní Dhuibhne has the protagonist's mother send her to an unspecified island in the North Sea, thus

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 71.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 69.
[63] É. N. Dhuibhne, "Summer's Wreath", p. 135.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 138.
[65] *Idem.*
[66] *Ibid.*, p. 137.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

enhancing the isolation of the place and the alienation of the girl. This occurs frequently in Mansfield's stories in the collection *In a German Pension* with the character of "a young woman, alone and vulnerable among strangers".[68] The North Sea in particular seems as far as possible from civilization, a place "where English wasn't spoken and nobody knew anyone worth knowing",[69] a place where respectability can be protected from shame.

In "Summer's Wreath" Katherine meets Floryan early on in the story. He introduces her to the Russian writers, his wide knowledge in Russian and European culture and literature opens Katherine's mind to Tolstoy, Gogol, Turgenev. He gives her some Russian stories he has translated into German for her to read and translate into English as a language exercise. However, the dominating presence of Chekhov remains in between the lines and his name is never openly mentioned. There are references to biographical details, "he'd been dead for five years",[70] to translations of some collections into German and Italian, "he'd written short stories, a few plays. Not much else".[71] Floryan comments on the unnamed author saying "This fellow, he is good",[72] "[a] pity he is not known in Europe",[73] "[i]n Russia, much admired".[74] And in spite of his admiration, Floryan defines him "a local writer … essentially local".[75] His words suggest the reason why Chekhov's name remains unmentioned and hidden in the story as this reproduces the literary context of the time as well as Mansfield's sensitivity to the international literary landscape.

Floryan advises Kathleen to translate a German version of one of Chekhov's stories into English. The story is "Spat' khochetsia", known in English as "Sleepy", a "sensational account of child slave-labour and baby murder".[76] Floryan later suggests Kathleen should write her own version of it, with Frau Holle, the landlady, as the cruel employer and Rosenhaus as the setting. This will become "The Child who Was Tired" to be published in *In a German Pension*.

Interestingly, Ní Dhuibhne exploits the episode as a reflection on writing, on the combination of mental activity and self-discipline, on transla-

[68] G. Boddy, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
[69] É. N. Dhuibhne, "Summer's Wreath", p. 135.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 150.
[71] *Idem.*
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 148.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 150.
[74] *Idem.*
[75] *Idem.*
[76] C. Tomalin, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

tion and on tradition. "I did it. —says Kathleen— An exercise. Oh, it's as easy as cheese to write a story when somebody hands you the plot".[77]

The focus of the second part of the story revolves around Katherine's miscarriage. Ní Dhuibhne keeps the details of the event as realistic as possible, as this happened while Mansfield was moving furniture in her room, as recorded in her biographies.[78] In the story the protagonist is more concerned with the writing desk than with her condition: "The desk was oh so heavy. But I had shifted furniture before and I knew how to do it".[79] This highlights the need to write and a desk is a catalyst at the beginning of the story: "There *was* a desk. That was the great thing!"[80]

The interaction between pregnancy and creativity is marked by the use of similes. The lamp is "like a fresh leaf",[81] and similes introduce the unimagined and unimaginable baby: "how could a woman like me, a *girl*, alone on an island in the North Sea, without a man at her side, have a baby boy? It would be like having a frog, or a seal, or a tortoise".[82] All of them are implicit references to tradition and to folklore, to the story of the Frog Prince, a seal recalls the selkie and is also a totem symbol of imagination and creativity, while the tortoise is quite an open reference to Aesop's story of the Tortoise and the Hare, besides being a symbol of good luck, and in Greek mythology it was sacred to Hermes, the messenger god.

The issue of creativity and language occurs later on in the story in an incursion into magic realism, in which in "forms of osmosis" "the factual coexists and interacts with the imaginary".[83] Just before her miscarriage Kathleen sees a baby eating a book, eating her stories:

> I saw this thing. … The baby. … He was perfectly formed as if from grey silk, with a round head and a fat little slug body. And in the baby's little fishy hand was a little shadow book.
>
> This baby of mine had got hold of my stories. He had them all, in his fin fingers. […]
>
> the baby raised my book to his mouth. And now I could see that he had an enormous mouth. In among the yellow flowers and the orange his mushroom body, his waving fish hands, disappeared, and he became an enormous mouth, with big sharp teeth like a shark's.

[77] É. N. Dhuibhne, "Summer's Wreath", p. 152.
[78] *Vid.* C. Tomalin, *op. cit.*, p. 70; G. Boddy, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
[79] É. N. Dhuibhne, "Summer's Wreath", p 155.
[80] *Ibid.*, p. 134.
[81] *Idem.*
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[83] Elsa Linguanti, Francesco Casotti, and Carmen Concilio (eds.), *Coterminous Worlds: Magical Realism and Contemporary Post-Colonial Literature in English*, p. 1, p. 2.

> He started to eat the book. My stories
> That's what babies do. Eat.[84]

The water imagery implicit in "little fishy hand", "fin fingers", again "waving fish hands" and finally "shark" recalls the amniotic fluid of the unborn baby and yet his "big sharp teeth" cast a bridge to the fairy tale of Frau Holle, the old woman with long sharp teeth in the story collected by the Brothers Grimm in the first edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, published in 1812. In "Summer's Wreath" Ní Dhuibhne finds a way to elaborate on folklore tradition early on in the story: "My mother paid Frau Holle well (that's what I called her; she had another name) to look after me".[85] Typically, Ní Dhuibhne makes frequent use of brackets in her stories as a stylistic choice often to insert disclaimers,[86] and in "Summer's Wreath" brackets are used again as a sort of container for the description of the owner of Rosenhaus:

> Her husband was the innkeeper but Frau Holle wore the trousers (well, most of the time she wore a dress that looked like something you'd see in a pantomime: a heavy sack of a skirt bunched over her big bottom, a black bodice laced up the front over her big bosom, and a white lacy blouse billowing over her big red arms).[87]

The owner of the thatched cottage is a sort of caricature and resembles a fictional character in a story, which is emphasised by the childlike repetition of "big" ("big bottom", "big bosom", "big red arms") recalling the Little Red Riding Hood's repetitions of the same adjective when addressing her grandmother/the wolf. Thus in "Summer's Wreath" traditional fairy tales are embedded in the text along with more explicitly literary references.

In the story of Frau Holle collected by the Grimm Brothers and known in English as Mother Hulde, a woman's stepdaughter and her own daughter are juxtaposed, the former being pretty, laborious and generous, while the latter is ugly and lazy. A victim of her stepmother, the good sister is forced to go down a well to get her spindle and here she meets Frau Holle, an old woman with sharp teeth, who in a way is a goddess of light and darkness, her name recalls Hell, the kingdom of the dead and her teeth remind a skull, a symbol of death. At the same time the German word 'hold'

[84] É. N. Dhuibhne, "Summer's Wreath", pp. 153-154.
[85] *Ibid*., p. 134
[86] *Vid*. E. D'hoker, *op cit*., p. 132
[87] É. N. Dhuibhne, "Summer's Wreath", pp. 134-135.

means lovely and graceful, so Frau Holle is at the same time the goddess of the spring and the goddess of the underworld. Thus, the fleeting presence of the owner of Rosenhaus is a variant of the traditional Frau Holle, which provides an interesting interaction between the tradition of folklore and fairy tales and the impact of European literary works.

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne sheds light again on the Irish and international canon in the short story "Emma Jane", a conscious rewriting of Joyce's "Eveline", and as such it raises questions on texts and textuality. The story was originally written for a radio series commemorating Bloomsday and produced on BBC Radio 4 on June 15, 2004, later to be published in 2005 in the collection *Moments*, edited by Ciara Considine, in aid of the tsunami victims. Unlike "The Woman with the Fish", Ní Dhuibhne chooses not to follow the Joycean text step by step, but to give prevalence to its final part with an interesting twist in the plot.

"Emma Jane" is set in Dublin Airport, where the protagonist, like Joyce's Eveline, is about to leave with her nameless foreign boyfriend, ostensibly a Muslim, for an unspecified location somewhere in the Middle East to visit her boyfriend's family. Waiting for the flight gives the first-person narrator the opportunity to reassess the relationship. Witnessing a group of asylum-seeking gypsies about to be deported back to their own country Emma Jane has a sort of epiphany: "And at that moment something happened. A dark wave washed over my spirits. Everything sank —… I felt oceans tumbling around in my heart and I wanted to weep for weeks."[88] The stylistic choice of alliteration ("wave washed", "wanted to weep for weeks") highlights the "dark wave" that overwhelms her and reaches a climax in the "oceans *tumbling* down in my heart", an open intertextual reference to the final lines of Joyce's "Eveline": "All the seas of the world *tumbled* about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her".[89]

The sea images of the original ("all the seas", "drown") are enlarged in Ní Dhuibhne's story ("a dark wave", "Everything sank", "oceans"). Symbolically, water represents cleansing, life and freedom, while oceans often represent obstacles or mysterious places, a place where to be dragged down into deep depths. Water has the power of freedom enhanced by the use of the verb "to tumble" in its double implication, the physical and concrete act of falling or rolling down, and the colloquial sense of grasping, understanding, in this case a sort of epiphany. Eveline is unable to "take

[88] É. N. Dhuibhne, "Emma Jane", p. 238.
[89] James Joyce, *Dubliners*, p. 31; emphasis is my own.

the plunge" and go;[90] Emma Jane chooses not to follow her boyfriend and changing her mind she decides to take a different plunge, catching "the blue airport coach" back into the city.[91]

A brief reference worth making in this analysis of Ní Dhuibhne's fiction is the occasional presence of a Gothic trend that can be detected in some of her stories as a form of continuity of both the Irish and continental tradition. According to Julian Wolfreys, texts are variously "haunted" by other texts,[92] and in turn "it is the text itself which haunts and is haunted",[93] which can be applied in a wider sense to intertextuality at large as well as to the use of tradition in a wider spectrum. This happens in two stories in particular, "Goldfinch in the Snow", published in the collection *Surge* edited by Frank McGuinness in 2014, and "Illumination", first published in the collection *The Shelter of Neighbours* in 2012, featuring variants of the Gothic mansion and of the Gothic villain.

The urban landscape of the short story "Goldfinch in the Snow" sheds light on the new Ireland of immigration and is the background for a variant of Gothic features. Here the young Bulgarian waitress Darina is heading to a New Year's Eve party where she hopes her Irish boyfriend will propose to her, "if they got married she'd belong here".[94] It is her boyfriend, however, who plays the villain and fails to turn up thus leaving her in the cold to her fate.

Realising that no buses are coming, she takes a taxi that turns into a variant of a Gothic castle or prison. The taxi driver acts as a Gothic villain, "all in black, black shirt and black hoody and black jeans, black as a crow".[95] The ominous simile evokes the traditional symbol of a crow as death and ill luck, but also power, intelligence, mystery; a crow's cleverness and a deceiving nature are prominent in Aesop's fables. The taxi driver drugs, rapes and then kills the young immigrant. Her thin clothes and shoes metaphorically stand for her defencelessness, "her high heels and her black lacy stockings with the spots",[96] "the tiny red cap on top, … the scrap of yellow silk at her throat".[97] Later, like a victim in a Gothic novel, Darina finds herself on the freezing asphalt and sees "something red glittering" in the snow "and that is maybe her red cap. Or maybe it

[90] É. N. Dhuibhne, "Emma Jane", p. 236.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 240.
[92] Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings. Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature*, p. ix.
[93] *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
[94] É. N. Dhuibhne, "Goldfinch in the Snow", p. 54.
[95] *Ibid.*, p. 56.
[96] *Ibid.* p. 54.
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

is her red blood".[98] The choice of the colour red marking Darina's violent death counterbalances the colours of life opening the story, "Green and yellow and electric blue in the inky water. Flamingo pink".[99] The lack of punctuation in the descriptive extract provides a sense of continuity that contrasts with the two-word verbless sentence, stylistically anticipating the end of life and hope. Darina is the goldfinch of the title destined to collapse in the snow. A little bird of continental Europe, in pagan culture a goldfinch represents the soul of man at the moment of death, and a subtext of transformation underlies the story as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Achalantis, one of the Pierides, was transformed into a goldfinch by Athena. Darina is the continental bird who cannot find a home in the new country, her would-be murderer tells her he has "nothing against foreigners",[100] yet his animal-like snort kills her hopes of a new life in Dublin.

In the story "Illumination", Ní Dhuibhne follows the *fil rouge* that characterizes most of her later fiction, shedding light on the figure of an artist and issues about writing and artistic creativity at large, as fleeting references to the biographies of Anton Chekhov, Karen Blixen, William Trevor interlace with other artistic expressions like painting and music.

It is a story which exploits a variety of motifs from folklore and fairy tales that intertwine with Gothic elements. "Illumination" is set in an artists' retreat in California, a typically isolated place surrounded by "a grove of pine trees".[101] Dangerous animals threaten the place, more spoken about rather than actually seen, from bobcats to a mountain lion, both a presence and an absence at the same time. In one of her walks in the nearby forest, the nameless first-person narrator finds herself in the foreign territory familiar in fairy tales, where gates open onto unknown tracks in the woods. The use of similes recalls the imagery of Gothic fiction, the unnoticed gate, a traditional threshold to be crossed to get into an unknown land, is "constructed of logs, old and clothed with that pale green moss that hangs on the oak trees, a strange, dry, lacy green that looked like something that would grow on an ancient coffin, or like the cobweb veil of a skeleton".[102] References to a coffin and a skeleton create an implicit connection with the Gothic tradition, anticipating the mysterious house in the forest as an allomorph of a Gothic castle where delicious food seems

[98] *Ibid.,* p. 57.
[99] *Ibid.,* p. 52.
[100] *Ibid.*, p. 56.
[101] É. N. Dhuibhne, *The Shelter of Neighbours*, p. 27.
[102] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

to appear "without agency" out of nowhere,[103] as in a fairy tale. A "prick of unease" underlies the protagonist's sensations when wearing the red moccasins that mysteriously fit perfectly,[104] and the contrast between fascination and discomfort mark each of her visit to the house. The three people inhabiting the place are welcoming yet disquieting and enigmatic, and the woman of the house herself is halfway between a witch and a fairy, a potential villain, whose penetrating eyes, of an "unusual hazel colour",[105] later described as "yellowish",[106] turn into a prison-like stare: "I felt penetrated by her eyes".[107] As darkness sets in, the windows turn metaphorically into "black pools",[108] which anticipate the feeling of imprisonment the narrator later experiences while being driven back to the artists' retreat. "I was terrified …. I'd been locked into the jeep".[109] Ní Dhuibhne elaborates on such traditional Gothic *topoi* revolving around variants of castles, dark vaults, maidens in danger and persecuted heroines, hidden potential villains, recontextualizing them in a very non-traditional setting yet keeping the sombreness of the house and its surroundings alive.

Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's novels and stories are varied and multifaceted, as she exploits creatively a wide range of motifs and topics belonging to a variety of literary contexts beyond the limits of the local Irish tradition. In an innovative and original way, she connects past and present in ground-breaking works of fiction imaginatively transforming and giving new life to her search for the roots and beginnings of storytelling. Ní Dhuibhne's innovative use of the Irish tradition incorporates various layers of the European tradition, or traditions, in terms of situations, plots, characters and imagery. Her postmodern fairy tales, her remakes of old legends, her experiments with language and structure and her careful use of intertextual and metanarrative elements have attracted considerable critical attention. Yet, her creative work becomes even more valuable in the context of contemporary writing if it is extended and enlarged taking into account some examples of the wider perspective of the European literary tradition from different cultures. These are roots and beginnings, from which new beginnings arise and evolve in a highly personal and imaginative way.

[103] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[104] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[106] *Ibid.*, p. 36.
[107] *Ibid.*, p. 41.
[108] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[109] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

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Biscuits at Grandma's and Other Family Horrors: Hansel and Gretel in *The Gathering* by Anne Enright

@

Ana Elena González Treviño

Large families, we all know them. More common in the past, especially in Catholic countries where contraception was banned, they continue to be a cultural referent and a staple for fiction, especially Irish fiction. Anne Enright's Booker Prize winning novel, *The Gathering* (2007) is a skilfully designed literary piece about the undercurrents and unacknowledged wounds and scars of family life which unconsciously shape the failings and tragedies of their members. The Hegartys are one such family. We meet them through the eyes of 39-year-old Veronica, the eighth of twelve children, at the time when Liam, the brother she was closest to in age and friendship, has committed suicide. Subtly posed as an enigma or even a very unglamourous whodunit, the mystery at the heart of Liam's suicide appears to hold the key to the variegated angst of the entire family. Veronica feels obliged to make sense of what happened as she goes through the turbulent, voluminous riverbed of her labyrinthine family memories, which she reconstructs, with the ever so slight but prevalent shadow of a doubt, with some avowedly imaginative inferences, as a familiar fairy tale of horror. Everything seems to point at, very directly, some obscure event "what happened in my grandmother's house the summer I was eight or

nine",[1] a nondescript "crime of the flesh" that initially resists characterization, but which was traumatic enough to lead to Liam's death. This event which, the narrator reiterates, may not have happened at all since she doubts her own memory, is clouded by the mists of time or, as we soon begin to perceive, the unconscious erasure or blockage of trauma, which is why it fits better, according to the narrator, within the framework of unreality, paradoxically underlining its likelihood.

The novel opens with the desire of recollection, even while the drapes of uncertainty and scepticism hang over the memory exercise that is about to ensue. Veronica casts doubts over her own mind and even over the usefulness of remembrance to bring out the devastating truth now, in the present of her narration, when her brother is already gone, and the residual, dry bones of history, in her own imagery, will be ever insufficient to make sense of what happened. She comes forth to testify, not to denounce; not dutifully, but almost as a rant, out of her own need, for her own sake, because she ran an equal danger and was very likely also a victim. The magnitude of things, both material and abstract, varies so much from childhood into adulthood that what seemed large then, may have been really quite small, even insignificant; but the opposite is also valid. The ineffability of the matter may be the cause of Veronica's mistrust of her own memory, of her skirting around the issue, going about in circles in avoidance of the unspeakable, yet always within the jungle of her numerous, but clueless, family. And yet, that cryptic centre is the exact place where Enright wishes to go, to illumine with the light of words the horrid darkness of the past. Nonetheless, this is not merely a tale about a skeleton in the closet coming to light to re-establish harmony. The dysfunctionality of the Hegartys may stem from many sources, it is hinted; the mystery of Liam's loss is just the most gruesome and undeniable.

Psychoanalytic readings of *The Gathering*, such as Gardam's (2009) and O'Neill's (2015) suggest that the text lends itself to such a reading given the sexual nature of the trauma Veronica is exploring. Without pursuing this interpretation exclusively, I do concur insofar as it may have been an important factor for Enright in the composition of the piece as a whole. A family gathering or *céili* in Gaelic culture may be seen as the literary commonplace working as a melting pot for clashes and alliances among individual members who only come together on special occasions, to significant emotional cost. As mirrors of each other, the grandparents, parents,

[1] Anne Enright, *The Gathering*, p. 1.

siblings and grandchildren, they are all compounded into a multifaceted prism that may easily magnify what they hate about themselves, what they would rather never claim as their own. Typically festive, in this case the occasion that brings the Hegarty clan together is funereal, thus setting a dejected tone to the entire proceedings, more suitable for psychological exploration and reflection than for celebration.

In addition to the Gaelic, social connotation of the term, the concept of gathering acquires a suggestive polysemy, since it broadens its significance in order to stand for picking up the pieces of something in order to reconfigure the whole. Thus, a gathering is also a realization, a dawning that occurs in the mind of the narrator with transformative potential. In that sense, the story does not disappoint; Enright delivers, since Veronica does manage to fish from the depths of her unconscious the truth or *a* truth that might afford an explanation, a way of facing the new present reality.

In addition, Margaret O'Neill's points out the affinity of *The Gathering* with the ancient, orally transmitted, mourning Irish tradition in the genre of the *caoineadh*, anglicised as 'keen'.[2] The comparison with a folkloric genre may seem striking if we consider the unquestionably self-conscious use of artifice in the intricate design of the novel, yet the symbolic dimension of the narrator's both inward and outward performance of grief may in fact resonate with the quintessentially feminine quality of mournful keening. Veronica's prolonged lamentation may arguably fulfil the function of purging the soul, even if conveyed through sophisticated literary artistry. Yet, the novel's affinity with popular forms may reach even further, as we shall see.

From the unconscious to the manifest, Enright creates powerful vortices of language that whip up the already overpowering emotional state of Veronica's despair, given away by a stream of consciousness technique, seamlessly shifting from the banal to the profound, from the present to the past, from conjectures to facts. More than just a talking cure, family stories pour out of stories as if she were clearing an old wardrobe full of a mixture of both old and new clothes belonging to four generations, which she throws about, not caring particularly for where they fall or which one of her many siblings, progenitors or children is dispatched in the process. The Hegarty family appears as one multiple, collective being with many

[2] Pronounced [kwínith]. O'Neill argues the trope of the keening woman may even have nationalist resonance, since even Ireland itself was represented as a "poor old woman 'who must be rescued from her grief' (Margaret O'Neill, "The *Caoineadh*, Psychoanalytic Theory, and Irish Writing: Anne Enright's *The Gathering*", p. 191.)

misgivings, but none as dark as the tale of abuse that ultimately could have brought about Liam's demise. In what amounts to an act of psychological housecleaning, Veronica prepares the way for her own embracing of the inadequacy and horror that may outweigh her own family's post Celtic Tiger normalcy and prosperity.[3]

The vivid presence of the grandmother, Ada, from the start, contrasts with the blurred quality of the mother, who should have been accountable for whatever happened to her children, but whose absent-mindedness, bordering on idiocy, seems to have exempted her from any responsibility, having had twelve children and seven miscarriages. "[My] mother is such a vague person, it is possible she can't even see herself".[4] Veronica sometimes even doubts her mother remembers her name, since she simply calls her darling, just as she would any of her children. She has been said to embody the "lack of subjectivity and invisibility accorded to motherhood".[5] Not all mothers in the novel are the same. Mrs. Hegarty's subjectivity has suffered more than that of any other mother in the novel because she has spent most of her adult life either pregnant or giving birth. Nineteen pregnancies can certainly seem to warrant an obliteration of agency and its unconscionable consequences. Her unmitigated, compulsive reproduction seems to have made life an insult the narrator finds hard to forgive, "the stupidity of so much humping".[6] Veronica's mother did not even make an effort to keep track of her children, who got used to protect her themselves, rather than the other way round, by keeping things from her as they grew up in order not to worry or upset her, in a reversal of roles the narrator also finds reprehensible. Mrs. Hegarty's unregulated body, her uninterrupted reproduction reveals her, indeed as oversexed and hence otherwise inane.[7] Her diminished awareness, however, has a most dire consequence, since it is directly related to the tragedy that ensued.

Veronica's father does not seem to count much either when it came to looking after their children. His only act of generosity or protectiveness appears to have been that of also keeping unpleasant things from his wife, but he was indifferent when it came to engendering multiple children in her womb: "when he had the sex that produced the twelve children and seven miscarriages that happened inside my mother's body […] then that was all

[3] Kathleen Costello-Sullivan, *Trauma and Recovery in the Twenty-First Century Novel*, p. 55.
[4] A. Enright, *The Gathering*, p. 4.
[5] Susan Cahill *apud* Laura Sydora, "Everyone Wants a Bit of Me: Historicising Motherhood in Anne Enright's *The Gathering*", p. 241.
[6] A. Enright, *The Gathering*, p. 8.
[7] K. Costello-Sullivan, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

he was doing —he was having sex".[8] While not fulfilling the typical role of the absent father —how could he have had so many children otherwise— there is in his character a similar psychological absence which constitutes an eloquent justification for the carelessness perceived by an adult Veronica.

The Hegarty parents are characterized in such a way that, even though they appear superficially loving and caring towards their brood, they both have incurred into a kind of parenthood fatigue that might, if not justify, explain the serious negligence that led to the loss or near loss of two of their younger children. In a way, Veronica reminisces that Liam and herself were abandoned in the unhospitable, metaphorical wilderness, where they were led to Grandma's candy house, unaware that a prowling ogre was ready to consume them.

Enright does not shy away from writing about the crudest topics or painting the most sordid scenes. Her artistic dilemma in *The Gathering* could have been, however, how to tell a tale of child abuse in a way that was compelling beyond the obvious moral outrage that may have been even inadvertently eroded by reiterated accounts of abuse in the media, mostly within the ranks of the Catholic priesthood in countries like Ireland. These are there, to be sure, but in the background; they serve mostly as a trigger to readdress Veronica's own trauma from an adult perspective. As a matter of fact, she claims she may never have been able to recollect what happened if it had not been for the fact that she was "listening to the radio, and reading the paper, and hearing about what went on in schools and churches and in people's homes".[9] As children, she and Liam were in all likelihood at least partially unaware that harmful abuse was taking place at all. The formulation of child abuse as a social reality and its legal typification has its own history, but one critic has suggested that Enright did much to consolidate it as a major theme in Irish fiction, together with Eimear McBride's *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* (2013).[10] Another critic has claimed that *The Gathering* is "the most searing fictional representation to date of the devastating effects of the trauma of child sexual abuse in Ireland" to the degree that it acquires the dimension of a collective trauma, only comparable to a war or natural disaster.[11]

Enright's solution is both ironic in its allusiveness and imaginative on its own right, combining avant-garde narrative non-linearity with a semi-en-

[8] A. Enright, *The Gathering.*, p. 227.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 172.
[10] Sylvie Mikowski, "Gothic and Noir: the Genres of the Contemporary Fiction of 'Containment'", p. 93.
[11] Liam Harte, *Reading the Contemporary Irish Novel 1987-2007*, p. 223.

coded fairy tale. One caveat must be raised before proceeding. While parental neglect turned into desertion and hence betrayal is carefully set out as one key cause for the abuse suffered by both Liam and Veronica (especially Liam), it is far from being the main focus of the novel. Equally, it would be too simplistic to say that *The Gathering* is a rewriting of "Hansel and Gretel", and yet the affinities are there, suggesting at least one potential source used by Enright which is irresistible to explore. I would like to argue, rather, that "Hansel and Gretel" provides a much needed shorthand for the dynamics of abuse, and that some of its components pepper the novel to provide both the narrator and the reader with a code for better grasping the situation. As she declared in a recent interview, Enright was a disciple of Angela Carter when she did an MA in creative writing at the University of East Anglia. Carter, who "was the first to take those fairy tales and turn them inside out", was deeply admired by Enright; so much so that she chose *The Bloody Chamber* as one of the books that changed her life.[12]

Psychoanalytic readings of "Hansel and Gretel" are not rare, and even if the use of fairy tales was much more frequent in the early days of psychoanalysis, in at least one contemporary example a patient was treated for neglect and abuse by referring to the story during her analysis sessions. Her analyst, Robert S. White, still advocates the efficacy of myths and folktales as a help to organise the mind in coherent narratives that help to express the ineffable. The Grimm brothers had theorized about a distinction between *Naturpoesie* and *Kunstpoesie*, the poetry of nature to be found in oral folktales and legends, and the poetry of art, printed, authorial, contrived. The Grimms wished to rescue the all but lost *Naturpoesie* of folktales to try and restore national and psychic integrity.[13] White in turn claims that a story such as "Hansel and Gretel" has come to be "deeply embedded in our culture […] There are countless contemporary translations, retellings, and derivatives of the fairy tale […] along with cartoons, movies, poems, and operas. Most adults […] have had the story read to them in childhood, and it permeates the culture".[14] The way in which tales such as this one contribute to shape the way we make sense of things is by working as a template from which we create a personal myth that may help the way we process experience, thus granting some manner of form and meaning to our life.

I do not think it is strictly the case in *The Gathering* to find such a one-to-one projection, least of all with any kind of rigorous therapeutic effect

[12] A. Enright, "Shelf Life: Anne Enright on the Five Books That Made Her", par. 7.
[13] Robert S. White, "Hansel and Gretel: A Tale of Terror", p. 915.
[14] *Idem.*

in mind. Nonetheless, there seems to be no question that the protagonist strives to go deeper and deeper into her own story in an attempt to restore the wholesomeness that had been lacking for so many years, a lack which her brother's death had only served to emphasise, and that in doing so she does recur to some recognizable features that are reminiscent when not betraying a direct connection to "Hansel and Gretel". The parallels that can be drawn between the two, warrant at least a remarkable, if not compelling, suggestiveness worth exploring.

Having dispatched the parents, we turn to the grandmother, Ada, who is not exactly a malevolent witch, but whose own frailties turn out to be critical and, in the long run, arguably lethal, for one of her many grandchildren. She is a rather more vivid character than her daughter, at least in Veronica's narration, who makes a purportedly arbitrary choice of the point of departure for her story. From quite early in the novel, we get this declaration: "the seeds of my brother's death were sown many years ago".[15] And almost immediately, without anything that might be described as a transition: "Lambert Nugent first saw my grandmother Ada Merriman in a hotel foyer in 1925. This is the moment I choose. It was seven o'clock in the evening. She was nineteen, he was twenty-three".[16] This particular beginning is pitched as a love story between the narrator's grandmother and a man who is not her grandfather, but who was a familiar visitor at her grandparents' house. From then on, Ada's story becomes the most cogent strand of Veronica's digressive account, despite the fact that she could not have known with any degree of certainty what happened in the past, but it would be a fair gamble to claim this was it.

Also, an abyss of meaning is opened up between Liam's demise and the intricacies of Ada's romantic life. Veronica sets out to bridge that gap as best she can, weaving seemingly unrelated pieces of information here and there, from the populous riot of her huge family, but it is the grandmother's tale, in the end, that brings the reward of the awful truth. In sum, Ada had two suitors, Lambert Nugent and Charlie Spillane. "She did not marry Nugent, you will be relieved to hear. She married his friend Charlie Spillane. And not just because he had a car. But he never left her. My grandmother was Lamb Nugent's most imaginative act. I may not forgive him, but it is this —the way he stayed true to it— that defines the man most, for me".[17]

[15] A. Enright, *The Gathering*, p. 13.
[16] *Idem.*
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Ada, beautiful and flirtatious, kept Nugent around even after her marriage, feeding her vanity from his devotion or rather, his lust, and in turn she kept herself as a tantalizing possibility for him. Nugent's initial insufficiency by comparison to Charlie, arguably from an economic perspective, changes as the years go by; he ends up getting the upper hand, and holds the cards to take his revenge on a betrayal that was never phrased as such, but that led him to a powerful sense of entitlement in all things concerning Ada: in his mind, she owed him. Ada's indebtedness to Nugent is both actual and figurative. Veronica digs into an old dresser to find an old box with the rent books for her grandparents' house. She infers that Charlie, her grandfather "owned the house once, but lost it to Nugent on a horse",[18] making Nugent their landlord. Throughout the years Nugent pays them monthly visits to pick up the rent. This could be unpleasant enough; but the situation worsens. There comes a time when money becomes an issue, so Ada uses her charms, her seductive hands, her sweet biscuits, to soften Nugent's claims, his voraciousness: "his mouth got more greedy around her biscuits".[19] Eating Ada's biscuits reveals Nugent's consuming attribute, a giveaway of what was to come, even though at first this act only appeared to be a subliminal way of possessing Ada's body, which had somehow managed to elude him under the guise of respectability.

Enright had already explored the possibilities of the edible woman in *The Pleasure of Eliza Lynch* (2002), a historical novel where the protagonist identifies herself and her body as ripe fruit, who everybody ate with their eyes.[20] The gaze as a means of sexual ingestion, as it were, is certainly to be found in *The Gathering* too. Nugent could eat as many of Ada's biscuits as he liked, so long as he kept his hands to himself. Ada herself had decided to call him Nolly May, an odd nickname at first sight, but revealing enough of the nature of their relationship. In a Joycean play of words, it presumably came from Christ's command to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection: *noli me tangere,* do not touch me, which Ada sometimes articulated as Nolly May Tangerine.[21] Ada, being married to another man and in the traditional context, *belonging* to him, did not allow Nugent to come too close, but everyone "could tell how much he wanted Gran".[22] Her refusal of decades went hand in hand with her semiconsciously teas-

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 232.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 252.
[20] Carina Hart, "Fruit, Water, Ice, Glass, Gold: Images of Human Beauty in Post-1980 Anglophone Fiction", p. 89.
[21] A. Enright, *The Gathering*, p. 250.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

ing him for an equal number of years, which fed Nugent's sense of entitlement and ended up, in my proposed context, turning him into a devouring, self-indulgent ogre, the monster, the abuser.

At first Veronica does not point the finger at Ada, but she is there, nonetheless, luring the ogre into proximity of her dear, her tender grandchildren, whom she inadvertently would be ready to sacrifice. In her defence, Ada Merriman had been an orphan who had managed to survive somehow, but at whose funeral many years later Veronica is mostly indifferent.[23] "She was nice, of course —she was my Gran— but she wasn't the woman who woke me at four in the morning with the answer to it all: the Hegarty conundrum, the reason we were all so fucked up and so very much here".[24] But Veronica pictures Liam and herself as orphans too,[25] abandoned by their parents to deal with unspeakable horrors on their own, in the house where they should have felt safe. There is no commiseration (how could there be?) towards her grandmother who, Veronica decided, had been a prostitute,[26] reinforcing the overall sense of permissiveness that seemed to surround her when it came to men, even though she led a life of outward respectability. The cycle of abandonment and abuse that is to be inferred from the recurring image of Ada as a child after the death of her own mother goes a long way back into the depths of time, but in Veronica's mind the span of four generations is enough, managing to make her wonder about her own role as mother and whether she has succeeded or failed to protect her daughters.

The year in question, Veronica, Liam and Kitty (who was mercifully saved from the ordeal) were "farmed out to Ada" (86) and they did not see their mother for a long time,[27] not even for Christmas, she being unwell. The image of the still very young children separated from their mother is superimposed to that of Nugent, arriving at Ada's with a box of "jellied fruit, or jelly impersonating fruit, in semicircles of orange and yellow and green". This deceitful candy is an ominous forewarning of what is to come. Actually, "he always had sweets for the children": shortbread VoVos, liquorice Blackjacks and more.[28] In adulthood Veronica helplessly regrets that she liked the sweets.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 85.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 90.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 86.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 101-102, p. 213.

One of the most unpardonable aspects of the story is that the place where it all happened is the grandmother's house, the witch's house in "Hansel and Gretel", which is announced as the scene of the crime from the very first sentence: "what happened in my grandmother's house..."[29]. Houses, the feminine, domestic space par excellence, also function as psychic continuations of the persons that inhabit them. For instance, the paternal house, the house where Veronica grew up, was chaotically extended as the family got larger to the point that she claims "[t]he house is all extension and no house",[30] a reflection of the senseless growth of the family. However, the relationship is also inverted and the family invariably becomes a dwelling place for subjectivity: "I do not think we remember our family in any real sense. We live in them instead".[31] In that sense, Ada's house is Ada, her domain, her responsibility.

Veronica is looking for the cause of her brother's suicide, to be sure, but also for "the one story that would explain us all",[32] "the reason we were all so fucked up",[33] and it is all linked to the house in Broadstone. It was not a house made of gingerbread or candy, but there was sugar enough in the premises, associated to the endless cups of tea Ada drank with Nugent, as she coquettishly moved the teaspoon to dissolve the sweetness; the sweets Nugent brought for the children went very well with the palatable aura of the place. What should have been a place of shelter for the children, their grandmother's house, becomes a candy trap, the abhorrent place of abuse. There were a few giveaway signs, such as "the peculiar small growth flowering inside [Nugent's] ear" remembered by Veronica,[34] which has the ring of a true memory, and the true repellence that children may have towards the bodies of the old. Or the way in which he always sat with "his hands [...] placed square on each knee, always leaning forward slightly [...] like someone who wasn't getting much sex".[35] The mixture of her childhood gaze and her adult experience is what makes her realization so complete.

In order to understand how Ada let him enter her life to such a degree, Veronica first imagines her grandparents' wedding night with unromanticized squalor,[36] and then she pictures her easily having an affair with

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 66.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 85.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[35] *Idem.*
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Nugent: "the bookie fucks the whore".[37] Veronica's desire to make sense through her stream of thought makes her rehearse a matter-of-fact objectifying of sexual intercourse, "these questions of which or whose hole, the right fluids in the wrong places, these infantile confusions and small sadisms", half ironic in an adult context, are nonetheless quickly to be discarded "because there is a limit to what you can fuck and with what".[38] The fact that Ada and Nugent's relationship never had carnal fulfilment turned out to rebound and harm the children. Thus, the domestic space becomes unconsciously tainted and obnoxious for them, psychically and physically devoured by the witch and the ogre. To stress the underlying hypocrisy of the adults, Veronica points out that it was not in Ada's "good room" that the abuse likely took place, but in an adjacent, marginal room. Adding insult to injury, Veronica sees with her mind's eye Ada passively witnessing the abuse from the doorway and doing nothing to put a stop to it.[39]

As it turned out, Liam probably became a diabetic in adulthood, mainly as a consequence of his alcoholism, but the suggestion of those deceitful sugary treats which led to harm him irreversibly at Ada's house as the hidden culprits prevails. When Veronica travels to reclaim the body, she smells in him "some metabolic shift, a sweetness to his blood and breath that I did not recognise".[40] He drank heavily and he also smoked. It is impossible not to see Enright winking at her readers in a particular passage where Liam and Veronica "tussle at the oven door" like Hansel and Gretel at the witch's house, only this time an adult Liam is irresponsibly lighting a cigarette from the oven and burning his hand.[41] Interestingly, Liam probably picked the smoking habit from Ada, since as a child he liked to play with her cigarettes.[42] The significance of the oven, on the other hand, is not to be missed since all the biscuits come from an oven, just as every child comes from a womb. Mrs. Hegarty, Veronica's mother, spent her life baking, as it were, children in the oven of her womb. As a child molester, Nugent is figuratively just eating biscuits.

There are other nods at fairy tales in passages about needles and wounded womanhood. Veronica recalls that once she "sewed the tips of [her] fingers together with one of Ada's needles",[43] Ada herself, at an

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 139.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 221.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 127.
[43] *Idem.*

earlier time, had had an accident with the sewing machine, apparently pinching her finger with the mechanical needle. The incident became all the more traumatic for her granddaughter because, since her finger was bandaged and useless for a while, Ada had asked for Veronica's help in the intimate task of pressing shut the garter button of her stockings, making her too uncomfortable to be so close to this part of her grandmother's body while perceiving "the sour smell of her respectability".[44] Ada's sewing basket provided another opportunity for self-piercing when Veronica tries "acupuncture on [her] thigh, testing the depth of the needles as they went through fat and meat to the cartilage or the bone".[45] Such acts of self-harm reveal that Veronica realises there is a matrilineal inheritance that regards women as penetrable, sexualized objects which she does not seem able to escape.[46] The irate conclusion is to see herself as a mirror of the mother and grandmother she so despises. While Veronica, unlike Ada, is in a position of post-Celtic Tiger affluence with her Miele dishwasher and her Saab car, her objectified, scarred femininity still binds her close to her female progenitors.

The phallic symbolism of the needle is expanded in the figure of the knife, which abounds in *The Gathering*. From the disturbing and initially inexplicable scene of Liam throwing a knife at his mother, when the narrator has not yet revealed anything about the abuse,[47] to the chief traumatic scene when Veronica inadvertently opens the door on Nugent molesting Liam, she is thinking of knives and penises as analogous types of weapon: "You don't kill someone by having sex with them. You kill them with a knife, or a rope, or a hammer, or a gun. You strangle them with their tights. You do not kill them with a penis".[48] Yet her conclusion in adulthood is that indeed the opposite is true, that Liam died as a consequence of the abuse perpetrated in childhood.

When she recalls more reluctantly, on a deeper level, her own experience of abuse, it could be either way, that she is confusing her identity and Liam's, or that they both suffered the same kind of abuse; the memory is too strong, too horrid to be real. "It is a very strange picture. It is made up of the words that say it".[49] And yet it is the ability to name, to describe what the mind refuses to admit as truth that opens the way for healing

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 91.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 129.
[46] K. Costello-Sullivan, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
[47] A. Enright, *The Gathering*, p. 6.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 145.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

and restoration. Her account as a whole does pave the way to address the fragmentation and dislocation of her identity. In this way, Enright has found a way to say without saying, to infer without claiming, thus conveying a close representation of the real effects of trauma through a language that is both coherent and incoherent, or rather, that finds its coherence only through its incoherence. The adequacy of fiction in dealing with trauma comes precisely from its unspeakable quality. As Roger Luckhurst has claimed, "the trauma aesthetic is uncompromisingly avant-garde: experimental, fragmented, refusing the consolations of beautiful forms, and suspicious of familiar representational and narrative conventions".[50]

[50] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 81.

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PART II
CREATIVE WRITING, TRANSLATION AND PERFORMANCE

The River Capture

@

Mary Costello

The house has settled around him, restive now. He opens a bottle of Rioja, admires the ruby glow of the wine streaming into the glass. He sips it, lets it linger on his palate for a moment, then down his gullet it goes. Outside, a bird is singing in short sweet trills. Maeve had wanted to get a parrot for the flat in Harold's Cross but he never liked the idea of caged birds. Joyce kept two little parakeets for a while in Paris, Pierre and Pipi. One of them flew in the window one day and stayed and, not wanting it to be alone, he acquired the other. Probably saw it as a sign. Wonder if he clipped their wings. Or taught them to speak. Or sang to them. Probably spent hours peering at them with his poor eyesight, delighting in their plumage, in their little nipping and kissing and beak tapping. Leaning in closer, imitating their whistles and chirrups, picking up their secret little tones in his inner ear… slipping deeper and deeper into communion with them until he emitted his own little trills and twitterings in reply to theirs. Luke remembers buying a book about birdsong; it's somewhere in the house. Every morning at dawn the author entered an aviary in a zoo – in Philadelphia or Pittsburg – and played his flute to the birds. As time passed the birds started to imitate his notes and sing back to him.

He boils potatoes, fries the steak in a little butter and garlic, then lifts it onto a warm plate and lets the brownish meat juice trickle over it. Lily will soon appear, drawn by the aroma. At the table he draws the Borges book and a book of Derek Mahon's poems close to him. Certain nights are right for poems and he has a knack of opening a page at random, hitting on exactly the right one. He pours more wine. When he cuts into the steak, blood-brown juices run out, and he salivates. The meat is delicious. He thinks of Bloom's pork kidney and wonders why he ate pork. He wonders if it really is possible to taste urine off a cooked kidney. He remembers his alarm the first time he got a strong sulphurous whiff off his own urine after eating asparagus.

He eats another forkful of steak, then some potato sopping in juice. The potato melts in his mouth. Another forkful of steak. The eyes of this cow will pursue me through all eternity. Poor Bloom. The weight of feeling he carried on his shoulders. Such humanity. Joyce too, a gentle soul. His whole life marred by illness and poverty and Lucia's madness. Only fifty-eight when he died. Perforated ulcer. Luke was shocked when he came upon the Post Mortem report as a footnote in Ellmann's biography. Reading it felt like rummaging through the body itself. Paralytic ileus. Extensive bleeding. Enormously dilated loops of small bowel as large as a thigh, coloured purple. *Head section not permitted.* His stomach must have been cut to ribbons from all the white wine. If only he'd listened to Nora and gone to a doctor, instead of paying heed to the Jolases and the other intellectuals telling him for years that the stomach pains were psychosomatic. All that genius… gone forever. Feel him close still. Always. Have to keep the Ellmann book close to hand. He had a blood transfusion the day before he died and received the blood of two Swiss soldiers from Neuchatel. A good omen, he thought, because he liked Neuchatel wine. His last hours. Slipping into a coma. Waking in the night, asking for Nora. His coffin carried up the hill through the snow to the Fluntern cemetery. Eternally with me.

Excerpt from *The River Capture,* a novel by Mary Costello.
Costello, Mary, *The River Capture*. Edinburgh, Canongate Publishers, 2019.

La confluencia en el río

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Mary Costello

La casa se ha asentado en torno a él, ahora inquieto. Abre una botella de Rioja, admira el brillo rubí del vino fluyendo hacia la copa. Bebe un sorbo, lo deja reposar en el paladar por un momento y, después descender por la garganta. Afuera, un pájaro canta en breves y dulces trinos. Maeve había querido tener un loro en el departamento de Harold's Cross, pero a él nunca le gustó la idea de las aves enjauladas. Joyce tuvo dos periquitos en París, por un tiempo. Pierre y Pipi. Uno de ellos entró por la ventana un buen día y decidió quedarse, así que, como no quería que estuviera solo, adquirió el otro. Probablemente lo interpretó como una señal. Es de preguntarse si les recortó las alas. O les enseñó a hablar. O les cantaba. Probablemente pasaba horas observándolos con su limitada vista, deleitándose con su plumaje, con sus mordisqueos, besuqueos y el golpeteo de los picos. Acercándose, imitando los silbidos y chirridos, guardando en el oído interno sus tonos bajos y secretos…deslizándose hacia una comunión cada vez más profunda con ellos, hasta que él emitió sus propios trinos y gorjeos en respuesta a aquellos de las aves. Luke recuerda haber comprado un libro sobre el canto de las aves; está en algún rincón de la casa. Cada mañana, al amanecer, el autor entraba al aviario de un zoológico —en Filadelfía o

Pittsburg— y tocaba la flauta para las aves. Con el paso del tiempo, los pájaros empezaron a imitar las notas y a cantar en respuesta.

Cuece papas, fríe el filete en un poco de mantequilla y ajo, lo sirve en un plato tibio y lo baña con el acastañado jugo de la carne. Lilly aparecerá en cualquier momento, atraída por el aroma. Ya en la mesa, coloca a su alcance el libro de Borges y un poemario de Derek Mahon. Algunas noches son perfectas para la poesía, y él tiene cierta habilidad para abrir un libro en cualquier página y dar con el poema indicado. Se sirve más vino. Al partir el filete, los jugos rojizos y marrones se derraman, y lo hacen salivar. La carne está deliciosa. Piensa en el riñón de cerdo de Bloom y se pregunta por qué comía cerdo. Se pregunta si en verdad es posible percibir el sabor a orina en un riñón ya cocinado. Recuerda cuánto se alarmó la primera vez que su propia orina desprendió un intenso tufo sulfúreo después de haber comido espárragos.

Come otro buen bocado de filete, y después una papa rebosante en jugo. La papa se derrite en su boca. Otro bocado de filete. Los ojos de esta vaca me perseguirán por el resto de la eternidad. Pobre Bloom. El peso emocional que cargaba sobre sus hombros. Tanta humanidad. Joyce también, un alma noble. Su vida entera empañada por la enfermedad y la pobreza y la locura de Lucia. Sólo cincuenta y ocho años cuando murió. Úlcera perforada. Luke se conmocionó cuando leyó el informe *post mortem* como una simple nota a pie de página en la biografía de Ellmann. Leer esa nota fue como hurgar en el cuerpo mismo. Íleo paralítico. Sangrado abundante. Asas intestinales enormemente dilatadas en un intestino delgado tan hinchado como un muslo, coloración púrpura. *Disección de cabeza no permitida*. Su estómago debe haber estado hecho trizas por todo el vino blanco. Si tan sólo hubiera escuchado a Nora y hubiera ido al médico, en lugar de hacerle caso a los Jolas y a los otros intelectuales que le dijeron, durante años, que los dolores de estómago eran psicosomáticos. Todo ese genio… perdido para siempre. Lo siente cerca todavía. Siempre. Tiene que mantener el libro de Ellmann a la mano. Recibió una transfusión sanguínea el día antes de morir, la sangre de dos soldados suizos de Neuchatel. Un buen augurio, pensó, porque le gustaba el vino de Neuchatel. Sus últimas horas. Deslizándose hacia el coma. Despertando en la noche, preguntando por Nora. Su ataúd llevado colina arriba, a pesar de la nieve, hasta el cementerio de Fluntern. Eternamente conmigo.

Fragmento de *The River Capture*, una novela de Mary Costello.
Traducido al español por Aurora Piñeiro.

The Geology of Translation

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Aurora Piñeiro

Rivers are powerful geological agents. They do not simply sit on a landscape but actively transform it. Water flowing through a stream performs different types of geologic changes, which include erosion, transportation and deposition, among others. So does literary translation.

Usually a solitary practice; sometimes a collaborative endeavour; but always a challenging one. As stated by Michael Cunningham, "'Translation' as a human act is, like so many human acts, a far more complicated proposition than it may initially seem to be."[1] However, literary translation is a fascinating art. For every dilemma a translator faces, there is frequently a joy lying in wait on both riverbanks of the flow of writing. In relation to its source, literary translation may cause erosion, as ellipsis is sometimes necessary. It favours transportation, for it moves precious things across borders, while it often unsettles the notion of borders itself. And it may also be complicit in deposition, as it sometimes preserves sediments from the text of departure or is in need of adding linguistic dregs demanded from the target language. In any case, pleasure is not alien to

[1] Michael Cunningham, "Found in Translation", screen 1.

these geological transformations, as "the joy we get from reading a great book is multiplied many times in the intimate act of translating one."[2] And this is the case when a translator has the privilege of transporting a novel by Mary Costello to another cultural landscape.

The River Capture (2019) is Costello's second novel, and it narrates the story of Luke O'Brien, a thirty four-year old man who used to teach in Dublin but has moved to his family farm, Ardboe, in Waterford, where he is now supposed to lead a quiet life. He is a James Joyce scholar who dreams of writing a book on Joyce and even fantasises about establishing a school where the curriculum would be designed using *Ulysses* as the pivotal source. Though these expectations may at times be a source of anxiety, they mostly represent a consolation found in literature. And for the purposes of Costello's novel, they are one of the ways in which metatextuality is enhanced in a work that indeed manages to be a contemporary rewriting or appropriation of *Ulysses* and many of its narrative features. The pervading use of stream of consciousness, the adoption of a question-and-answer format that emulates that of the "Ithaca" episode in the hypotext and the sensorial (and sensual) quality of the prose, all articulate a novel that pays homage but also distances itself from the Joycean source. Erosion, transportation and deposition play varied roles in *The River Capture*, as rewriting is, in more than one way, a supreme form of translation. But even if many textual marks alert us of the presence of a Joycean heritage and its reformulations, the melancholic tone of several passages and the meditation on the theme of loneliness also remind us that we are in Costello's narrative territory, as this novel also establishes a dialogue with her previous one, *Academy Street* (2014). According to Susan Cahill, *The River Capture* "reflects on human connection and distance, and the impact -from the profound to the miniscule- of one life on another"[3] and, I would add, of one river on another.

The word *capture* in the title of the novel is indeed a clever choice. In terms of Luke's life in his family home, it makes reference to an actual capture or confluence in the river Sullane, in Waterford. But *capture* is a highly connotative word in English as well as in Spanish, where "captura" has a different meaning in the language of geology, and "confluencia" is the preferred term. Fortunately, "confluencia" is another polyvalent word in Spanish, with the extra benefit of the "c" sound at the beginning, which facilitates a phonetic echo in the target language, thus my decision to use

[2] Robert Wechsler, *Performing Without a Stage. The Art of Literary Translation*, p. 239.
[3] Susan Cahill, "*The River Capture* by Mary Costello -a Homage to *Ulysses*", p. 1.

it in the translation included in the present book. Costello provides readers with a definition of this cunning word in the novel itself, as one of the narrative voices declares: "When a river erodes the land and acquires the flow from another river or drainage system, usually below it, the first river is said to have captured the second in an act of piracy."[4] And several types of captures are represented in this work, as Luke struggles with his personal and family past, the unexpected arrival of love, and the multi-layered ways in which *Ulysses* has captured the protagonist's imagination, or Luke appropriates the Joycean legacy as a form of life, or Costello transforms *Ulysses* into a contemporary narrative rendering on the art of literature, human relationships and the natural world.

There are, of course, other challenges in the translation of this novel. The difficulty to preserve a third-person voice, with an internal focalisation in the protagonist's mind, which is substituted by a first-person narration towards the end of the novel. Or the efforts to resist the temptation of adding, when dealing with an unorthodox English syntax and the requirements of the Spanish language where, for example, verbs do include reflexivity. This last aspect is also related to my determination to (partially) resist what Susan Sontag calls naturalisation, when she declares that "[…] to naturalize a foreign book is to lose what is more valuable about it: […] [the] reader will be deprived of the knowledge of otherness that comes from reading something that actually does sound foreign."[5] All in all, my translation is an attempt to negotiate the Joycean sediments that Costello beautifully unsettles, the audacity of her prose, and the fluidity of a narrative river in the confluence of two languages and cultures.

[4] Mary Costello, *The River Capture*, p. 259.
[5] Susan Sontag, "The World as India", screen 1.

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La geología de la traducción

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Aurora Piñeiro

Los ríos son agentes geológicos poderosos. No reposan sobre el paisaje, sino que lo transforman de manera activa. El agua que fluye por el caudal de un río provoca diversos tipos de cambios geológicos, los cuales incluyen la erosión, la transportación y la deposición, entre otros. Así lo hace, también, la traducción literaria.

Con frecuencia, una práctica solitaria; algunas veces, una empresa colaborativa; pero siempre un reto. En palabras de Michael Cunningham, "La 'traducción' es un acto humano y, como muchas otras actividades humanas, es una propuesta mucho más complicada de lo que puede parecer a primera vista."[1] Sin embargo, la traducción literaria es también un arte fascinante. Por cada dilema que el traductor enfrenta, hay a menudo algún tipo de gozo esperando en ambas riberas del caudal de la escritura. En relación con el texto fuente, la traducción literaria puede causar erosión, ya que la elipsis es a veces necesaria. Favorece el acto de la transportación, ya que muda objetos preciosos allende las fronteras y, en el proceso, inquieta la noción misma de frontera. Y también puede tornarse

[1] Michael Cunningham, "Found in Translation", pant. 1. Todas las traducciones de las citas son mías.

cómplice de la deposición, ya que algunas veces preserva sedimentos hallados en el texto de partida o se encuentra con la necesidad de agregar residuos lingüísticos que la lengua meta le exige. En cualquiera de los casos, el placer no es ajeno a estas transformaciones geológicas, ya que "el gozo que obtenemos de leer un buen libro se multiplica muchas veces en el acto íntimo de traducirlo."[2] Y este es el caso cuando un traductor tiene el privilegio de transportar una novela de Mary Costello hacia otro paisaje cultural.

The River Capture (2019) [*La confluencia en el río*] es la segunda novela de Costello, donde la autora narra la historia de Luke O'Brien, un hombre de treinta y cuatro años quien solía dar clases en Dublín, pero se ha mudado a la granja familiar, Ardboe, en Waterford, donde se supone que ahora vive una vida tranquila. Es un especialista en James Joyce que sueña con escribir un libro sobre dicho autor e, incluso, fantasea con fundar una escuela donde el plan de estudios estaría diseñado a partir de *Ulysses* como texto central. Aunque estas expectativas son, a veces, una fuente de ansiedad para el personaje, representan, sobre todo, una forma de consuelo hallado en la literatura. Y, para los propósitos de la novela de Costello, son una de las maneras en que la metatextualidad es reforzada en una obra que, en verdad, logra erigirse como una reescritura o apropiación contemporánea de *Ulysses*, y muchos de sus rasgos narrativos más destacados. El predominante uso del flujo de conciencia, la adopción de un formato de preguntas y respuestas que emula el utilizado en el episodio "Ithaca" del hipotexto, así como la textura sensorial (y sensual) de la prosa, todos estos rasgos contribuyen a la articulación de una novela que rinde homenaje, pero también establece una distancia crítica, con la fuente joyceana. La erosión, transportación y deposición juegan diversos papeles en *La confluencia en el río*, ya que la reescritura es, en más de un sentido, una forma suprema de la traducción. Sin embargo, aunque muchas marcas textuales nos alertan sobre la presencia de un legado joyceano y sus reformulaciones, el tono melancólico de múltiples pasajes en la obra y la meditación sobre el tema de la soledad también nos recuerdan que estamos en el territorio narrativo de Costello, dado que la presente novela establece un diálogo con la anterior, *Academy Street* (2014). Según Susan Cahill, *The River Capture* "reflexiona sobre la conexión y la distancia humanas, y el impacto -desde lo profundo hasta lo minúsculo- de una vida en otra",[3] a lo que yo agregaría, también, la confluencia de un río en otro.

[2] Robert Wechsler, *Performing Without a Stage. The Art of Literary Translation*, p. 239.
[3] Susan Cahill, "*The River Capture* by Mary Costello -a Homage to Ulysses", p. 1.

La palabra *capture* en el título de la novela es, en efecto, una elección inteligente. En términos de la historia de Luke en la casa familiar, el vocablo hace referencia a lo que es, *de facto*, una confluencia en el río Sullane, en Waterford. Pero *capture* es una palabra altamente connotativa tanto en inglés como en español, donde "captura" tiene un significado diferente en la jerga de la geología, mientras que "confluencia" es el término elegido por los especialistas para nombrar el fenómeno fluvial descrito en la novela. Por fortuna, "confluencia" es otro sustantivo polivalente en español, con el beneficio adicional de que el sonido de la grafía "c" al inicio de la palabra facilita un eco fonético en el lenguaje meta; de ahí mi decisión de usarla en la traducción del título incluida en el presente libro. Costello brinda a los lectores, con astucia, una definición del término en la propia novela. Una de las voces narrativas declara que: "Cuando un río erosiona la tierra y adquiere el flujo de otro arroyo o sistema de desagüe, que generalmente corre por debajo del primero, se dice que [en la confluencia] el primero ha capturado al segundo, en un acto de piratería."[4] Y varios tipos de "capturas" tienen lugar en esta obra: en la lucha de Luke con su pasado personal y familiar, en la sorpresiva llegada del amor a su vida, en las múltiples formas como el *Ulises* de Joyce ha atrapado la imaginación del protagonista, en la manera en que el personaje se ha apropiado del legado joyceano, o en las estrategias utilizadas por Costello para transformar *Ulises* en un ejercicio narrativo contemporáneo sobre el arte de la literatura, las relaciones humanas y el mundo natural.

La novela presenta, por supuesto, otros desafíos para la traducción. Menciono aquí dos de ellos. La dificultad de preservar una voz narrativa en tercera persona, con una focalización interna en la mente del protagonista, y la emulación del cambio que realiza la autora cuando esta estrategia es sustituida por el uso de la primera persona hacia el final de la novela. En segundo lugar, el esfuerzo de resistir la tentación de agregar palabras (sobreexplicar), cuando se está lidiando con una sintaxis inglesa poco ortodoxa y, al mismo tiempo, con la mecánica de la lengua española donde, por ejemplo, abundan los verbos reflexivos. Este último aspecto se vincula con mi empeño por resistir (al menos parcialmente) lo que Susan Sontag designa como naturalización: "[…] naturalizar un libro extranjero significa perder lo más valioso del mismo: […] [el] lector se verá privado

[4] Mary Costello, *The River Capture*, p. 259. Inserté en la traducción de la cita, de forma provisional y entre corchetes, la referencia al contexto de confluencia en el que la piratería fluvial ocurre, para hacer más obvio el vínculo entre las dos palabras (captura y confluencia) y cómo, aún en la descripción de lo geológico, se insinúan otros significados, que menciono en el cuerpo de este comentario. Sin embargo, no incluiría la información entre corchetes en la traducción de la novela.

del conocimiento de la otredad que es parte del acto de leer un texto que, de hecho, suena a extranjería."[5] En este sentido, y a manera de reflexión final, puedo decir que mi traducción intenta jugar con los sedimentos *joyceanos* que, con gran belleza, Costello inquieta en su texto, con la audacia de su prosa, y con la fluidez de un río narrativo donde puedan confluir dos lenguajes y culturas.

[5] Susan Sontag, "The World as India", pant. 1.

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Small Things Like These

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Claire Keegan

4

It was a December of crows. People had never seen the likes of them, gathering in black batches on the outskirts of town then coming in and walking the streets, cocking their heads and perching, impudently, on whatever lookout post that took their fancy, scavenging for what was dead or diving in mischief for anything that looked edible along the roads before roosting at night in the huge old trees around the convent.

The convent was a powerful looking place on the hill at the far side of the river with black, wide-open gates and a host of tall, shining windows, facing the town. Year round, the front garden was kept in order with shaved lawns, ornamental shrubs growing neatly in rows, the tall hedges cut square. Sometimes, small outdoor fires were made up there whose strange, greenish smoke carried down over the river and across town or away towards Waterford, depending on how the wind was blowing. The weather had turned dry and people remarked on what a picture the convent made, how like a Christmas card it was with the yews and evergreens dusted in frost and how the birds, for some reason, had not touched a single berry on the holly bushes; the old gardener himself had said so.

The Good Shepherd nuns, in charge of the convent, also ran a training school for girls, providing them with a basic education — and a successful laundry business. Little was known about the training school but the laundry had a good reputation: restaurants and guesthouses, the nursing home and the hospital and all the priests and well-off households sent their laundry in; reports were that everything that was sent there, whether it be a raft of bedlinen or just a half dozen serviettes, came back same as new.

There was other talk, too, about the place. Some said that the training school girls, as they were known, weren't students of anything but were girls of low character who spent their days being reformed, doing penance by washing stains out of the dirty linen, that they spent all day every day from dawn 'til night working. The local nurse had told that she'd been called out to treat a young woman who had varicose veins from standing so long at the wash-tubs. Others claimed that it was the nuns themselves who worked their fingers to the bone, knitting Aran jumpers and threading rosary beads for export, that they had hearts of gold and problems with their eyes, and weren't allowed to speak, but only to pray, that some were fed no more than bread and butter for half the day but were allowed a hot dinner in the evenings, once their work was done. Others swore the place was no better than a mother-and-baby home where common, unmarried girls went in to be hidden away after they had given birth, saying it was their own people who had put them in there after their illegitimates had been adopted out to rich Americans, or sent to Australia, that the nuns got good money by placing these babies out foreign, that it was an industry they had going.

But people said lots of things – and a good half of what was said could not be believed; never was there any shortage of idle minds or gossips about town.

Furlong didn't like to believe any of it but he'd gone, one evening, to the convent with a load well before it was due and, finding no sign of anyone at the front, had walked down past the coal house on the gable end and slid the bolt on a heavy door and pushed through to find a pretty orchard whose trees were heavy with fruit: red and yellow apples, freckled pears. He went on with the intention of robbing a plum but as soon as his boot touched the grass, five wicked geese ran out after him. When he retreated, they stood up on their toes and flapped their wings, stretching their necks out in triumph, and had hissed at him.

He'd carried on to a small, lighted chapel where he found more than a dozen young women and girls, down on their hands and knees with tins of old-fashioned lavender polish and rags, polishing their hearts out in circles

on the floor. As soon as they saw him, they looked like they'd been scalded — just over him coming in asking after Sister Carmel, and was she about? And not one of them with shoes but going around in black socks and some horrid type of grey uniform. One girl had an ugly stye in her eye, and another's hair had been roughly cut, as though someone blind had taken to it with shears.

It was she who came up to him.

"Mister, won't you help us?"

Furlong felt himself stepping back.

"Just take me as far as the river. That's all you need do."

She was dead in earnest and the accent was Dublin.

"To the river?"

"Or you could just let me out at the gate."

"It's not up to me, Girl. I can't take you anywhere," Furlong said, showing her his open, empty hands.

"Take me home with you, then. I'll work 'til I drop for ya."

"I've five girls and a wife at home."

"Well, I've nobody — and all I want to do is drown meself. Can you not even do that fukken much for us?"

Suddenly, she dropped to her knees and started polishing — and Furlong turned to see a nun standing down at the confession box.

"Sister," Furlong said.

"Can I help you?"

"I was just looking for Sister Carmel."

"She's gone across to St. Margaret's," she said. "Maybe I can help you."

"I've a load of logs and coal for ye, Sister."

As soon as she realised who he was, she changed. "Was it you that was out on the lawn, upsetting the geese?"

Furlong, feeling strangely chastised, took his mind off the girl and followed the nun out to the front where she took her time reading over the docket and inspected the load to make sure it matched the order. She left him then, going back in the side, while he put the coal and logs in the shed, before coming back out through the front door, to pay. He took stock of her while she was counting out the notes; she put him in mind of a strong, spoiled pony who'd for too long been given her own way. The urge to say something about the girl grew but fell away, and in the end he simply wrote out the receipt she asked for, and handed it over.

As soon as he got into the lorry, he pulled the door closed and drove on. Farther on, out the road, he realised he'd missed his turn and was heading in the wrong direction with his boot to the floor, and had to tell himself to

go easy. He kept picturing the girls down on their hands and knees, polishing the floor, and the state they were in but what struck him, too, was the fact that when he was following the nun back from the chapel he'd noticed a padlock on the inside of that door which led from the orchard through to the front, and that the top of the high wall separating the convent from St. Margaret's, next door, was topped with broken glass. And how the nun had locked the front door after her, with the key, just coming out to pay.

A fog was coming down, hovering in long sheets and patches, and there was no space on the winding road, to turn, so Furlong took a right onto a by-road, and then, farther along, took another right onto another road, which grew narrower. After he'd taken another turn and passed a hay shed he thought he had already passed, on the other side of the road, he met a loose *puckaun* trailing a short rope and came across an old man in a waistcoat with a bill-hook, slashing down a crowd of tall thistles at the roadside.

Furlong pulled up and bade the man good evening.

"Would you mind telling me where this road will take me?"

"This road?" The man put down the hook, and stared in at him. "This road will take you wherever you want to go, son."

"Chapter 4", *Small Things Like These*, a *nouvelle* by Claire Keegan.

Pequeñas cosas como ésas

@

Claire Keegan

4

Fue un diciembre de cornejas. La gente nunca había visto tantas, así reunidas en grupos negros, en las afueras de la ciudad, y luego entrando y transitando las calles, ladeando la cabeza y aterrizando, con descaro, donde se les antojara, buscando cosas muertas o zambulléndose, atrevidas, en todo aquello que pareciera comestible a lo largo de los caminos, antes de ir a posarse por la noche en los enormes árboles añosos que había alrededor del convento.

El convento, en la colina que había al otro lado del río, era un lugar de aspecto imponente, con portones negros abiertos de par en par y una multitud de ventanas altas y brillantes, que daban a la ciudad. Durante todo el año, el jardín del frente se mantenía cuidado, con el césped cortado, arbustos ornamentales que crecían prolijamente en hileras, los altos setos podados regularmente. A veces, allí se hacían pequeñas fogatas al aire libre cuyo extraño humo verdoso descendía sobre el río y atravesaba la ciudad o iba hacia Waterford, según cómo soplara el viento. El tiempo se había vuelto seco y la gente comentaba la imagen que ofrecía el convento, lo parecido que era a una postal navideña, con los tejos y los árboles de hojas

perennes cubiertos de escarcha, y cómo los pájaros, por alguna razón, no habían tocado una sola baya de los acebos. Eso había dicho el viejo jardinero en persona.

Las monjas del Buen Pastor, a cargo del convento, también dirigían una escuela de formación para niñas, que les proporcionaba una educación básica, y que era un exitoso negocio de lavandería. Poco se sabía sobre la escuela de formación, pero la lavandería tenía buena reputación: restaurantes y casas de huéspedes, la residencia de ancianos y el hospital, y todos los sacerdotes y familias acomodadas enviaban lo que tuvieran para lavar; según los informes, todo lo que ahí se enviaba, ya fuera un montón de ropa de cama o apenas media docena de servilletas, volvía como nuevo.

También se decían otras cosas sobre el lugar. Algunos sugerían que las alumnas de la escuela de formación, como se las conocía, no eran alumnas de nada, sino chicas de moral dudosa que pasaban sus días siendo reformadas, cumpliendo una penitencia mediante el lavado de las manchas de la ropa sucia, por lo que pasaban todos los días, el día entero, desde el amanecer hasta la noche, trabajando. La enfermera local había contado que la habían llamado para tratar a una joven que tenía várices de tanto estar de pie junto a las tinas de lavado. Otros aseguraban que eran las propias monjas las que se mataban, tejiendo suéteres de Aran y enhebrando rosarios para la exportación; que tenían corazones de oro y problemas de la vista, y que no se les permitía hablar, sino únicamente rezar; que a algunas, a mitad del día, no se les daba más que pan y manteca, pero que se les permitía una cena caliente por las noches, una vez terminado el trabajo. Otros juraban que no era más que un hogar para madres y bebés, donde muchachas solteras, comunes y corrientes, entraban para esconderse después de dar a luz, diciendo que era su propia gente quien las había mandado allí luego de que sus hijos ilegítimos fueran adoptados por estadounidenses ricos, o enviados a Australia, por lo que las monjas se hacían de un buen dinero colocando a estos bebés en el extranjero, industria que funcionaba bien.

Pero la gente decía muchas cosas, y una buena parte de lo que se comentaba resultaba increíble: nunca había escasez de mentes ociosas o de chismes en la ciudad.

A Furlong no le gustaba creer nada de eso, pero una tarde en que había llegado al convento con un cargamento mucho antes de lo previsto, al no encontrar a nadie en el frente, pasó delante del cobertizo del carbón, que estaba en el extremo final del edificio, corrió el cerrojo de una pesada puerta y la abrió para toparse con un bonito huerto cuyos árboles estaban cargados de frutas: manzanas rojas y amarillas, peras salpicadas de pecas. Continuó con la intención de robarse una ciruela, pero tan pronto como

pisó el césped, cinco gansos malvados salieron a su encuentro. Cuando retrocedió, se alzaron sobre las puntas de las patas y batieron las alas, estirando el cuello en señal de triunfo y le graznaron.

Continuó hasta una pequeña capilla iluminada, donde encontró a más de una docena de muchachas y de niñas, apoyadas en rodillas y manos, con trapos y latas de antigua cera de lavanda, lustrando en círculos el piso esforzadamente. Apenas lo vieron, reaccionaron como si se hubiesen quemado, y sólo porque vino y preguntó por la hermana Carmel, ¿estaba ella ahí? Ninguna de ellas tenía zapatos, sino que estaban en calcetines negros y algún tipo horrible de uniforme gris. Una niña tenía un orzuelo feo en el ojo, y el pelo de otra había sido cortado de manera tosca, como si un ciego se lo hubiera talado con tijeras de podar.

Fue ella la que se le acercó.

–Señor, ¿no nos ayudaría?

Furlong se sintió retroceder.

–Lléveme hasta el río. Eso es lo único que le pido.

Hablaba muy seria y con acento de Dublín.

–¿Al río?

–O al menos déjeme en el portón.

–No depende de mí, niña. No puedo llevarte a ningún lado –dijo Furlong, mostrándole sus manos abiertas y vacías.

–Entonces lléveme a su casa. Trabajaré para usted hasta que caiga rendida.

–En casa tengo cinco hijas y una esposa.

–Y yo no tengo a nadie, y lo único que quiero es ahogarme. ¿Ni siquiera puede hacer esa puta cosa por nosotras?

De repente, se dejó caer sobre sus rodillas y comenzó a lustrar, y Furlong se volvió y vio a una monja parada en el confesionario.

–Hermana –dijo Furlong.

–¿Qué se le ofrece?

–Sólo estaba buscando a la Hermana Carmel.

–Ha cruzado a St. Margaret's –dijo–. Quizá yo pueda ayudarlo.

–Traigo un montón de troncos y carbón para ustedes, Hermana.

Apenas se dio cuenta de quién era él, la monja cambió de actitud.

–¿Fue usted el que andaba por el huerto, molestando a los gansos?

Furlong, sintiéndose extrañamente castigado, dejó de pensar en la niña y siguió a la monja hasta el frente, donde ella se tomó su tiempo para leer el remito e inspeccionar la carga asegurándose de que coincidiera con el pedido. Entretanto él ponía el carbón y los troncos en el cobertizo, ella lo dejó y entró por el costado, antes de volver a salir por la puerta principal

para pagarle. Mientras ella contaba los billetes, la estudió; lo hacía pensar en un pony fuerte y consentido al que durante demasiado tiempo se había dejado en libertad. El impulso de decir algo sobre la niña creció, pero se desvaneció, y al final simplemente hizo el recibo que ella le había pedido y se lo entregó.

Apenas entró al camión, cerró la puerta y siguió el viaje. Más adelante, ya en la ruta, se dio cuenta de que se había olvidado de girar y de que estaba yendo a toda velocidad en la dirección equivocada, por lo que tuvo que decirse a sí mismo que debía aminorar la marcha. No dejaba de ver a las chicas arrodilladas, lustrando el suelo en el estado en el que se encontraban, pero lo que también lo sorprendió fue el hecho de que, cuando siguió a la monja de vuelta a la capilla, notó un candado en el interior de la puerta que conducía desde el huerto al frente, y que la parte superior del alto muro que separaba el vecino convento de St. Margaret's, estaba rematada con vidrios rotos. Y también, la manera en que la monja, cuando salió a pagar, había cerrado la puerta de entrada, con llave.

Descendía una niebla, flotando en grandes bancos y parches, y, en la carretera sinuosa, no había espacio para girar, de modo que Furlong tomó a la derecha por un camino secundario y luego, más adelante, volvió a girar a la derecha por otro camino, que se iba haciendo más estrecho. Después de dar otra vuelta y pasar un cobertizo de heno, que pensó ya había pasado, al otro lado de la carretera, se encontró con un chivo suelto que arrastraba una cuerda corta y se topó con un anciano de chaleco y con una hoz cortando un montón de cardos altos al borde del camino.

Furlong se detuvo y le dio las buenas noches al hombre.

–¿Podría decirme adónde me lleva este camino?

–¿Este camino? –dijo el hombre, bajando la hoz y mirándolo fijo–. Este camino te va a llevar a donde quieras ir, hijo.

“Capítulo 4”, *Pequeñas cosas como ésas*, una *nouvelle* de Claire Keegan, traducido al español por Jorge Fondebrider.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRANSLATING CLAIRE KEEGAN

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JORGE FONDEBRIDER

In the beginning there is euphony. Names that, without any visible reason, have a pleasant ring to them, resonate in some intimate fibre that makes them agreeable. And then there is a landscape, often imaginary, to which, as we walk along, we add things. I would say that was the beginning, the original reason of my attraction to Ireland. But later on I found what might be a more rational answer, one that is directly linked to its literature: compared to the excessive abstraction of the poetry written in my country at the time of my first visit to Ireland, Irish poets said it all. Thus, one knew where they came from, who their neighbours were, what their history was, what had happened to them, and everything that, because of its concreteness, is usually omitted when poetry becomes rhetoric. And, when extrapolated, all these data, ascertainable through the senses, endow writing with something like a metaphysical dimension that, paradoxically, is not detached from the more immediate data proposed by reality. After a couple of trips I realised this was not exclusive of poets: narrators, playwrights and essayists sought nourishment from the same sources. With these new eyes, I reread the "most difficult" writers —Joyce, Beckett, Flann O'Brien; that is to say, the holy trinity of Irish modernism— and that difficulty —more often than not due to poor translations— vanished.

By then my Ireland was already full of people and I had an incipient Irish history of my own. In 2006, during my fourth trip, I became aware of Claire Keegan's existence. In a chat with the poet Harry Clifton and his wife, the novelist Deirdre Madden, they told me I had to get acquainted with her work. I asked my friend Sinéad Mac Aodha, director of Literature Ireland, who Claire was. "One of our best short story writers" was her answer. Two days later, in the presentation of a poetry collection by Peter Fallon, owner and editor of Gallery Press —one of the more important publishers of poetry in Ireland—, in just a few words, Sinéad introduced me to a very pale red-haired young woman with intense eyes: she just said "Claire, this is Jorge" and "Jorge, this is Claire". We shook hands and that was it.

At the end of my visit, Sinéad gave me a copy of *Walk by the Blue Fields*, which I read during the flight back home. I started precisely with this short story. I got to the scene in which, after the wedding ceremony, the groom's brother, while dancing with his new sister-in-law, drunkenly hangs on her pearl necklace so as not to fall, and rips it; all the guests end up searching for the pearls that had spread all over the floor, and so does the priest that had just married the couple, but, as he picks up a pearl, he feels the warmth of the young bride between his fingers. And I shuddered as great literature every now and then allows us to. Claire had deeply moved me and, as it happens in such occasions, I immediately knew I had to translate her.

In March 2007 I spend some time in Mexico City as a guest author of the International Book Fair of Palacio de Minería, and one evening my country's cultural attaché invited my friend Pedro Serrano and I to a magnificent exhibition of colonial art in Colegio de San Ildefonso. The cultural attaché brought along Laura Niembro, contents manager of the Guadalajara International Book Fair (FIL Guadalajara). As it was bound to happen, we ended up drinking tequila in Covadonga. Around 2 am, already friends for life, Laura told us she had yet to invite a group of European writers, as every booking she had managed to arrange had fallen apart in the end. I boldly asked her why not consider Ireland. She said she had never had Irish guests and, fond as she was of the idea, she did not know where to start. I asked permission to use her phone. She handed it to me. The hour difference helped. Sinéad was home. I told her what was going on, passed the phone to Laura, they reached an agreement there and then, and, in November of that same year, Sinéad, with a delegation consisting of Gerard Donovan, Colum McCann, Jamie O'Neill and Claire Keegan, landed at the FIL. And so did I, as Sinéad and Laura's guest and as middleman between those Irish narrators and the Mexican audience.

It was soon obvious that theirs was a very different world. A press conference was held the very first day. Mexican journalists, used to the conceit of the Carlos Fuentes, Elena Poniatowskas and many other local heroes, kept asking about the writers' private lives and political opinions. The writers, used to being asked about their writing and nothing else, as is the case in the English-speaking world, refused to answer. The most adamant was Claire. She said: "I am Irish. I write about dysfunctional families, miserable loveless lives, paedophilia, disease, old age, winter, greyish skies, boredom and rain." And so question time was over. I must say I adored her.

We had time for a chat at the hotel. I told her I wanted to translate her. She was flattered, but that was that. Then, back in Buenos Aires, I set to it without beating about the bush. Finally, the publishing house Eterna Cadencia purchased the publishing rights of *Walk the Blue Fields*, and step by step it became *Recorre los campos azules*.

Translating Claire is not difficult. This is so not because her writing lacks precision but because she is such a good writer that it suffices to follow her closely without adding anything or trying to fix her words in any sense. So that is what I did. But I decided to be cautious, and, once I finished translating the whole book, I asked Inés Garland, an excellent narrator and a good friend who happens to be completely bilingual, to sit by my side with the original while I read the translation. Everything was fine, including the very local references and few Irish turns of phrase, mostly present in some of the dialogues. But Inés, who is very good at what she does, suggested I should disrespect Spanish and maintain some syntactic English structures. She told me that the word order in those structures was related to the dramatic quality Claire imprinted in her narrative, and changing it could threaten the effect I was looking for. And so, under this premise, I went over the whole book. In other words, though my origins lie in poetry, Claire and Inés made me think as a narrator, and this is one of the greatest lessons I have had about the art of narrative, an education that would be completed years later with Flaubert and Joseph Conrad.

Just after *Recorre los campos azules* was published, the Buenos Aires International Literature Festival (FILBA) was held. That first FILBA began in November 2008 and, as its main organizer was Pablo Braun, who happened to be the owner of Eterna Cadencia, Claire, until then completely unknown in Argentina, was invited to attend. She did, and she was interviewed. Fame of her fierce style soon reached every journalist through word of mouth. Nevertheless, she managed to give the most important interviews to the best of them. She was also part of a panel discussion

with the excellent novelist Carlos Gamerro, and she gave a reading. Out of programme, I arranged for Claire to read one of her short stories in the magnificent gardens of Villa Ocampo, the house of the great writer and patroness Victoria Ocampo; this I did through Diana Theocharidis, who was at that time in charge of cultural events. Claire shared the occasion with Juan Villoro, another great friend, who told me how pleasantly surprised and flattered he felt about having discovered Claire and shared the occasion with her. She was the first to read; we had distributed my translation of her story in advance so that the audience could follow the text while listening to her. Then came Juan, and, what can I tell Mexicans about how great it is to hear him talk and read? It was a great success. Claire left quite a deep impression in Argentina and her book started to sell splendidly. This led Leonora Djament, Eterna Cadencia's editor, to buy the rights of *Antarctica*, which I translated as *Antártida*.

I must say that it is only seldom that I have translated fragment by fragment. Yet these texts are so intense and emotionally charged that I needed long breaks before going back to them. That first book, which has been awarded numerous prizes, does not give the reader a break; it demands an enormous effort, not because the stories are themselves all that difficult but because of the extreme psychological and moral dilemmas that Claire has her characters endure. It is, once again, great literature, and this the public in Argentina understood, so that very soon Claire acquired a position among us similar to the one occupied by other authors such as the American writers Carson McCullers or Flannery O'Connor. What most of the readers ignore is that to those literary universes there is another one, one of silences and quiet sentences between lines, that must be added; this Claire learned from the marvellous prose of his fellow Irishman John McGahern, a sort of Irish Chejov and probably the best Irish writer in the second half of the twentieth century.

I went back to Dublin, and Claire travelled from the countryside, where she lives, for a visit. We had lunch together and she told me about her new book. This time it was not a collection of short stories but a *nouvelle*. Its title was *Foster*. Once again, Eterna Cadencia bought the rights and I translated it. But this time I had a huge problem: in Spanish, "foster" means something like "entenado". And it so happens that Juan José Saer, perhaps our most important writer since Jorge Luis Borges, has a novel, one of his best, titled precisely *El entenado*. Not only that: the main character in Claire's *Foster* is a girl in foster care; she is indeed an "entenada". To use this word in the title would not only prove to be a source of misunderstandings but would also give away the gender, which in English is not

revealed until well advanced the book. I said all this to Claire and she told me that Jacqueline Odin, her translator into French, had named the book *Les trois lumières*, quite a good title as it refers to a fundamental scene in the *nouvelle*. Claire suggested the same solution so that the title would be *Tres luces*; she liked it even better than her original and, had she thought of it before, she would have so named her book. It was indeed a solution. But I then said: "Claire, if I name it *Tres luces* instead of translating *Foster*, the public will think I made a mistake". She replied "It is your translation and thus your problem. Not mine."

In *Tres luces* the fierceness of her earlier short stories yielded to an enormous tenderness. It was Claire Keegan but also another writer who, perhaps, had made peace with some of the demons that guided her earlier works. And somehow this same quality can be read in *Small Things Like These*, which I provisionally translated as *Pequeñas cosas como ésas*. It is, I think, what we are apt to find in the fragment included in this book, where one can still perceive Claire, only so much wiser.

Translated into English by Socorro Soberón.

Lo que significa traducir a Claire Keegan

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Jorge Fondebrider

En el principio está la eufonía. Nombres que, sin que medie razón evidente, suenan bien, resuenan en alguna fibra íntima que los vuelve gratos. Y después hay un paisaje, muchas veces imaginario, al que uno, a medida que lo va recorriendo, le va sumando cosas. Diría que ese fue el principio, el motivo original por el que Irlanda me atrajo. Pero más tarde encontré una respuesta acaso más racional, directamente ligada a su literatura: frente a la excesiva abstracción de la poesía que se escribía en mi país cuando viajé a Irlanda por primera vez, los poetas irlandeses decían todo. Así, uno sabía de dónde venían, quiénes eran sus vecinos, cuál era su historia, qué les había pasado y todo aquello que, por concreto, suele omitirse cuando la poesía se convierte en retórica. Y todos esos datos, comprobables mediante los sentidos, extrapolados, dotan a la escritura de algo así como una dimensión metafísica que, paradójicamente, no se separa de los datos más inmediatos que propone la realidad. Al cabo de un par de viajes, descubrí que esa circunstancia no era propiedad exclusiva de los poetas, sino que narradores, dramaturgos y ensayistas, también abrevaban de esas mismas fuentes. Con esos ojos volví a leer a los escritores "más difíciles" –Joyce, Beckett, Flann O'Brien; vale decir, la santa trilogía del

modernismo irlandés– y la dificultad –muchas veces debida a las malas traducciones– se disipó.

Para entonces, mi Irlanda ya se había llenado de gente y yo también empezaba a tener mi propia historia irlandesa. En 2006, durante mi cuarto viaje, supe de la existencia de Claire Keegan. Charlando con el poeta Harry Clifton y con su esposa, la novelista Deirdre Madden, me dijeron que tenía que leerla. Le pregunté a mi amiga Sinéad Mac Aodha, directora de Literature Ireland, quién era Claire. "Una de nuestras mejores cuentistas", me dijo. Dos días después, en la presentación de un libro de poemas de Peter Fallon, el dueño y editor de Gallery Press –una de las más importantes editoriales de poesía de Irlanda–, Sinéad me presentó brevemente a una chica muy blanca, de pelo rojo y mirada intensa y nos dijo: "Claire, él es Jorge" y "Jorge, ella es Claire". Nos dimos la mano y eso fue todo.

Al final de mi viaje, Sinéad me regaló un ejemplar de *Walk the Blue Fields*, que leí en el avión. Comencé precisamente por ese cuento. Cuando llegué a la escena en que, después de la ceremonia de la boda, el hermano del novio, mientras baila con su flamante cuñada, borracho, para evitar caerse se aferra del collar de perlas de ella y lo desbarata, haciendo que todos los invitados se pongan a juntar las perlas del piso, incluido el cura que casó a los novios, pero que al recoger la perla siente el calor del cuerpo de la muchacha entre los dedos, sentí un sacudón, como esos que muy de vez en cuando nos permite la gran literatura. Claire me había conmovido profundamente y, como me ocurre en esas ocasiones, supe de inmediato que tenía que traducirla.

En marzo de 2007, invitado como autor por la Feria del Libro de Minería, estaba en Ciudad de México y una noche, la agregada cultural de mi país nos invitó a mi amigo Pedro Serrano y a mí a una magnífica exposición de arte colonial que había en el Colegio de San Ildefonso. La agregada vino con Laura Niembro, que es la directora de eventos de la Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara. Como no podía ser de otro modo, terminamos tomando tequila en el Covadonga. A eso de las 2 de la mañana, ya amigos de toda la vida, Laura nos contó que le faltaba invitar a un grupo de escritores de algún país europeo porque los que tenía agendados le habían fallado. Le dije con todo descaro que por qué no pensaba en Irlanda. Me dijo que nunca había tenido invitados irlandeses y que le gustaba la idea, pero que no sabía a quién dirigirse. Le pregunté si podía usar su teléfono. Me lo dio. La diferencia horaria ayudó. Sinéad estaba en su casa. Le comenté lo que pasaba, se la pasé a Laura, se pusieron de acuerdo y, en noviembre de ese mismo año, Sinéad, con una delegación compuesta por Gerard Donovan, Colum McCann, Jamie O'Neill y Claire Keegan, desembarcaron en la FIL.

Y yo también, como invitado de Laura y de Sinéad, y como intermediario entre esos narradores irlandeses y el público mexicano.

Rápidamente se hizo evidente que se trataba de mundos muy distintos. El primer día hubo una conferencia de prensa. Los periodistas mexicanos, acostumbrados a la hinchazón de los Carlos Fuentes, las Poniatowskas y otros muchos héroes locales, preguntaban por la vida privada de los escritores y por sus opiniones políticas. Los escritores, acostumbrados en el mundo angloparlante a ser interrogados nada más que por lo que escribían, se negaron de plano a contestar. La más enérgica fue Claire. Dijo: "Soy irlandesa. Escribo sobre familias disfuncionales, vidas miserables carentes de amor, sobre paidofilia, enfermedad, vejez, el invierno, el clima gris, el aburrimiento y la lluvia". Y con eso se acabaron las preguntas. Y debo decir que la adoré.

Tuvimos tiempo de charlar en el hotel. Le dije que quería traducirla. Se sintió halagada, pero todo quedó ahí. Luego, ya en Buenos Aires, me puse a batir el parche. Finalmente, la editorial Eterna Cadencia compró los derechos de *Walk the Blue Fields* que, de a poco, se fue convirtiendo en *Recorre los campos azules*.

Traducir a Claire no es difícil. No porque su escritura carezca de precisión, sino porque escribe tan bien que basta con seguirla de cerca sin tratar de agregar nada ni enmendarle la plana. Y eso hice. Pero decidí ser prudente y, una vez que terminé la traducción de todo el libro, le pedí a Inés Garland, una excelente narradora y amiga, absolutamente bilingüe, que se sentara a mi lado con el original, mientras yo le leía la traducción. Todo estaba bien, incluidas las referencias muy locales y los pocos giros de inglés de Irlanda, mayormente presentes en algunos de los diálogos. Pero Inés, que conoce muy bien el oficio, me sugirió que le faltara el respeto al castellano y que mantuviera algunas estructuras en el orden del inglés. Me dijo que, justamente, ese orden tenía que ver con una calidad dramática que Claire le estaba imprimiendo a la narración y que, si lo alteraba, podía atentar contra el efecto buscado. Y así, con esa premisa en mente, revisé todo el libro. Dicho de otro modo, a pesar de venir de la poesía, Claire e Inés me obligaron a pensar como un narrador y ésa fue una de las mejores lecciones que tuve sobre el arte de la narración, educación que años después iba a completar con Gustave Flaubert y con Joseph Conrad.

Apenas se publicó *Recorre los campos azules*, vino el Festival Internacional de Literatura de Buenos Aires. Ese primer FILBA empezaba en noviembre de 2008 y, como el organizador principal era el Pablo Braun, dueño de Eterna Cadencia, invitaron a Claire, hasta entonces, una completa desconocida en Argentina. Vino y fue entrevistada. Su estilo feroz rápidamente

se comunicó de un periodista a otro. Ella, sin embargo, se las ingenió para dar las entrevistas más importantes con los mejores. Asimismo, participó en una mesa redonda sobre narrativa con el excelente novelista Carlos Gamerro y también ofreció una lectura. Me las arreglé para que, fuera de programa, Diana Theocharidis, que dirigía los eventos culturales en la casa de la escritora y gran mecenas Victoria Ocampo, la invitara a leer un cuento en sus magníficos jardines. Lo hizo acompañada de Juan Villoro, otro gran amigo que me contó lo sorprendido y halagado que estaba por la compañía y el descubrimiento que le había significado Claire. Ella leyó primero y, para eso, repartimos la traducción del cuento en cuestión de modo que el público pudiera seguir el texto, pero escuchándola a ella. Después vino Juan y, bueno, ¿qué les voy a contar a los mexicanos lo bueno que es escucharlo hablar y leer a Juan? Fue un éxito rotundo. Y Claire dejó una impresión tan profunda en la Argentina que su libro empezó a venderse muy bien, lo que llevó a Leonora Djament, la editora de Eterna Cadencia, a comprar los derechos de *Antarctica*, que traduje como *Antártida*.

Debo decir que pocas veces me pasó traducir cuentos de manera fragmentaria. Pero la intensidad y la carga emocional de cada uno de esos textos me obligó a tomar largos descansos antes de retomarlos. Ese primer libro, que había ganado muchos premios, no le da respiro al lector, lo obliga a un enorme esfuerzo, no por las dificultades que presentan los textos, sino por los dilemas psicológicos y morales extremos a los que Claire somete a sus personajes. Se trata, nuevamente, de gran literatura, y así lo entendió el público argentino que, rápidamente, puso a Claire en una dimensión similar a la que tienen entre nosotros autoras como las estadounidenses Carson McCullers o Flannery O'Connor. Lo que la mayoría del público ignora es que a esos universos hay que sumar otro de silencios y frases calladas entre líneas, que Claire aprendió en la maravillosa prosa de su compatriota John McGahern, suerte de Chejov irlandés y, probablemente, el mejor escritor de su país en la segunda mitad del siglo XX.

Volví a Dublín y Claire vino desde el campo, donde vive, a visitarme. Almorzamos juntos y me contó de un nuevo libro. Esta vez no eran cuentos, sino una *nouvelle*. Se llamaba *Foster*. Eterna Cadencia volvió a comprar los derechos y yo volví a traducirla. Y acá se me presentó un problema enorme: "foster", en inglés, es algo así como "entenado", en castellano. Y justamente, una de las mejores novelas de Juan José Saer, acaso nuestro escritor más importante después de Jorge Luis Borges, se llama *El entenado*. Otro problema es que la protagonista es una niña que, efectivamente, es la entenada de una familia postiza. Llamar así al libro de Claire iba a ser una fuente de malentendidos y, además, el problema de género iba a

revelar ya desde el título lo que en inglés no se revela hasta adentrados en la lectura. Le comenté todo esto a Claire y me dijo que Jacqueline Odin, su traductora al francés, le había puesto al libro *Les trois lumières*, título pertinente, porque remite a una escena fundamental de la *nouvelle*. Claire me dijo que por qué no adoptaba yo también esa solución y lo llamaba *Tres luces*, ya que, en definitiva, a ella incluso le gustaba más y, si se le hubiera ocurrido antes, así habría llamado a su libro. Era una solución. Pero entonces le dije: "Claire, si yo, en lugar de traducir *Foster*, traduzco *Tres luces*, el público va a pensar que me equivoqué". Ella me dijo: "Es tu traducción y, por lo tanto, tu problema. No, el mío".

Con *Tres luces*, la ferocidad de los cuentos anteriores cedía a una enorme ternura. Era Claire Keegan, pero también otra escritora que, quizás, había hecho las paces con algunos de los demonios que guiaron a muchos de sus textos previos. Y, en cierto modo, esa misma calidad puede leerse en *Small Things Like These* que, provisoriamente, traduje como *Pequeñas cosas como ésas*. Es, creo, lo que uno va a encontrar en el fragmento incluido en este libro, donde sigue estando Claire, pero mucho más sabia.

Wisdom

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Sara Baume

Around the same time as the pandemic begins in Ireland, I notice that I have grown a new tooth. *This is unexpected*, I think, as is the pandemic, though there had been clues: a slight sensation of constriction in my upper jaw, a thread of blood while flossing.

There has always been a gap of hard gum at either end of my top row of teeth, like two empty chairs in the dress circle. Now the right side has been breached by a knurl of jagged bone. I cannot see it, even if I stand in front of the bathroom mirror with my head bent back. Even if I cram a compact mirror into my mouth and tilt it at an upward, rightward angle. But I can feel it. I feel it every couple of minutes. I feel it hundreds of times a day.

I feel it until my tongue aches.

We get the death toll every evening around six. We come in from our walk and switch the radio on. The death toll has become like the weather forecast. We go silent out of habit. We hear but do not assimilate. Seconds later, we ask each other: *what was it again?*

It is April. The weather is lovely, better than the death toll. The swallows turn up; the ditches bush up. The lawn bursts out in daisies, as does

the belt of grass that runs up the middle of the road. The road we live on is bumpy and windy and too narrow for two vehicles to pass at once. If you meet an oncoming car, you reverse until you reach a gateway. If you meet a tractor towing a slurry spreader, you panic. A couple of years ago I had a Dutch friend to stay who was not able to comprehend the principle of our road. He interpreted it, at first, as a one way system. He assumed, or so I imagine, that there was a concealed lane where traffic was travelling in the opposite direction; a tunnel beneath the visible road; an overpass obscured by cloud cover. *How do people not crash?* He asked when I confirmed that there wasn't. I had no satisfactory answer. This is something I have wondered myself.

The house we live in is charmingly symmetrical. Out the back, there's a kitchen/bathroom extension and alongside a cow shed that the landlady rents to a neighbouring farmer. Facing front, it has a door and two windows downstairs and three windows upstairs, a chimney either end. If you were to saw our house in half, straight down the middle, it would split into two indistinguishable halves.

Every evening our walk brings us up the hill overlooking our house. The road climbs and our home shrinks behind us. Its edges soften. Its details dissolve. At the top of the hill we turn around and see that it has become a miniature of itself, like a souvenir.

I will make this souvenir, I think. At this moment in time, it seems no more or less useless than anything else I might do.

I have always been attracted to souvenirs, the tackier the better. I love the idea that it might be possible to confine all of the colour, complexity, nuance and particularity of a place – of an experience – to a single, pocket-sized object. I love the audacity of the souvenir, the miraculous act of reductionism it represents. I am also drawn to paradox, and to form – to the clean shapes of our house, its lovely symmetry. I want to own a miniature of the place that sheltered us during this miniaturised period of history. I want to reach out and cup my palms around it.

At first I try to include every feature. I cut a short, twisted length of gorse and whittle it into a replica of the tree in the garden. I bend a length of light wire into a wobbly wrought iron gate. I mount a clay moon on a cocktail stick. *You are always trying to make celestial bodies that have no relevance to the project*, Mark points out, while it is still drying. He suggests I leave them alone and instead, in the future, make a sculpture composed entirely of stick-mounted moons.

He is also working on a project in response to the government travel restrictions. He is journeying the back roads of West Cork on Google Street View. He has restricted himself to those that are reasonably nearby and were available to him just weeks ago. He is looking for anomalies in the footage, for places where the slippage of time is conveyed. He is interested in lapses, absences, slight peculiarities. So far he has found a golden aeroplane appended to the sky, a mosquito resting against the lens of the camera, legs splayed, and a bungalow that disappears and reappears depending upon the direction you approach it from. He calls them his *treasures*.

I cast aside the clay moon, the wire gate, the whittled gorse. I revoke the features, the details. I decide my souvenir will be six simple pieces: the clay base, the house body, the roof, the kitchen extension, a chimney, a chimney. All but the base will be cast in modelling plaster from the plastic trays of Fig Rolls.

We are eating too many biscuits.

An excerpt from *Wisdom* by Sara Baume.

Sabiduría

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Sara Baume

Casi al mismo tiempo en que la pandemia comienza en Irlanda, me doy cuenta de que me salió un diente nuevo. "Qué cosa más rara", pienso, tan rara como la pandemia, aunque ha habido avisos: una ligera opresión en la mandíbula superior, un hilito de sangre al usar la seda dental.

Siempre he tenido dos huecos con la encía endurecida al final de cada hilera de dientes en la mandíbula superior, como dos asientos vacíos en el palco de un teatro. El lado derecho ya lo traspasó el filo del hueso. No alcanzo a verlo, ni cuando me paro frente al espejo del baño con la cabeza echada para atrás. Ni cuando me meto un espejo compacto a la boca y lo volteo para arriba, en ángulo hacia la derecha. Pero lo siento. Lo siento cada tantos minutos. Lo siento cien veces al día.

Lo siento hasta que la lengua me duele.

Nos dan la cifra de muertos todas las tardes, a eso de las seis. Llegamos de caminar y prendemos la radio. La cifra de muertos ya es como el pronóstico del tiempo. Nos hemos acostumbrado a guardar silencio. Oímos pero no asimilamos. Segundos después, nos preguntamos: "¿Cuántos dijeron?"

Es abril. El clima está maravilloso, mejor que la cifra de muertos. Llegan las golondrinas; las cunetas se llenan de arbustos. El pasto se tachona de margaritas, igual que la franja de césped que corre por el centro de la

calle. La calle en que vivimos es tortuosa, tiene baches y es tan angosta que no pueden pasar dos vehículos de una vez. Si viene un coche, te echas de reversa hasta que te metes a una entrada. Si viene un tractor con esparcidor lodoso, te entra el pánico. Hace un par de años se quedó con nosotros un amigo holandés que nunca alcanzó a entender cómo funcionaba nuestra calle. Al principio pensó que era un sistema de un solo sentido. Dio por sentado —o eso me imagino— que había un carril escondido para el tráfico que viene en dirección contraria; un túnel debajo de la calle que uno ve; un puente oculto tras las nubes. "¿Cómo es que no chocan?" me preguntó cuando le confirmé que no había nada de eso. No tenía yo una respuesta satisfactoria. También me lo he preguntado.

La casa en que vivimos es gratamente simétrica. Por atrás tiene una ampliación para la cocina/el baño y, ahí junto, un establo que la casera le renta a un vecino granjero. Dando al frente, tiene una puerta y dos ventanas en la planta baja, y tres ventanas en el piso de arriba, con una chimenea en cada extremo. Si cortaran la casa a la mitad, justo por en medio, se partiría en dos mitades exactamente iguales.

Todas las tardes nuestro paseo nos lleva a la colina que da a la casa. El camino sube y nuestra casa se encoge detrás de nosotros. Sus orillas se suavizan. Sus detalles se disuelven. En el tope de la colina nos damos vuelta y vemos cómo se convierte en una miniatura de sí misma, como un souvenir.

"Voy a hacer este souvenir", pienso. En este preciso momento, no parece ni más ni menos útil que cualquier otra cosa que pueda yo hacer.

Siempre me han llamado la atención los souvenirs: entre más cursis, mejor. Me encanta la idea poder confinar todo el color, toda la complejidad, todos los aspectos y toda la particularidad de un lugar —de una experiencia— en un solo objeto que quepa en un bolsillo. Me encanta la desfachatez del souvenir, el milagroso acto reduccionista que representa. También me atraen las paradojas y las formas… las formas puras de nuestra casa, su linda simetría. Quiero poseer una miniatura del lugar que nos dio cobijo durante este periodo miniaturizado de la historia. Quisiera cogerla con las manos y sostenerla entre mis palmas.

Al principio intento incluir todos los detalles. Parto un pedazo corto y retorcido de retamo y lo tallo para hacer con él una réplica del árbol del jardín. Doblo un tramo de alambre de luz para hacer una frágil reja de hierro. Monto una luna de barro en un palillo de coctel. "Siempre quieres hacer cuerpos celestes que no tienen nada que ver con el proyecto", comenta Mark, mientras se seca la maqueta. Me sugiere que me olvide de ellos y que, para la próxima, mejor haga una escultura que consista exclusivamente en lunas montadas en palillos.

Él también está trabajando en un proyecto que responde a las restricciones gubernamentales en cuanto a los viajes. Está recorriendo las vías alternas de West Cork en Google Street View. Se ha concentrado en las que estén a distancia razonable de nosotros y a las que hubiera tenido acceso en semanas recientes. Busca anomalías en los registros, lugares que han sentido el paso del tiempo. Le interesan los huecos, las ausencias, los detalles más discretos. Hasta ahora ha encontrado un avión dorado adjunto al cielo, un mosquito apoyado con las patas abiertas sobre la lente de una cámara, y un búngalo que aparece y desaparece dependiendo de la dirección en que te le acerques. Dice que son sus "tesoros".

Echo a un lado la luna de barro, el portón de alambre, el retamo tallado. Revoco los elementos, los detalles. Decido que mi souvenir tendrá seis piezas muy sencillas: la base de barro, el cuerpo de la casa, el techo, la ampliación de la cocina, una chimenea, una chimenea. Todo, menos la base, estará hecho de materiales obtenidos de las cajas de Fig Rolls.

Estamos comiendo demasiadas galletas.

Fragmento de *Sabiduría*, de Sara Baume.
Traducido al español por Mario Murgia.

Considering a Tale by Sara Baume: Translation, Wisdom, and Chinese Boxes

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Mario Murgia

Translation is an infinite game where one keeps opening Chinese boxes. Opening some of them, nonetheless, implies closing some of them too. Those which are closed do not necessarily remain locked forever, or even for a long time. In the process, those boxes that were closed for some good reason are opened again, revealing then the unprecedented possibilities of their initial usefulness and benefits. Those that were opened in the beginning can be sealed afterwards, not to exile to oblivion what they first offered, but to trade their initial gifts in new contents, nuanced and still supplied for, in the intimacy of a necessary pause by silent reconsiderations that, in the end, project significant voices (frequently deafening ones) in subsequent openings. The endless concert of Chinese boxes that open and close, in a translation, finds echoes in the ways in which translators themselves design in order to follow-through their own labour and, in that fashion, reaffirm it as a creative and creating expression of literary passages, of intellectual figurations.

Now, moving on to the substance at hand, and trying to find rigorous justifications for my translation of the previous passage written by Irish author Sara Baume, I came across the next adage after many years of having read it for the first time: “The genuine translator wants to bring

those completely separated persons, his author and to his reader [sic], truly together, and to bring the latter to an understanding and enjoyment of the former as correct and complete as possible without inviting him to leave the sphere of his mother tongue." I owe this rediscovery to Peter Cole, poet and translator from the United States, who, in his brief essay "Making Sense in Translation," quotes the famous comment made by German philologist Friedrich Schleiermacher, translated into English by the theorist and translation scholar André Lefevere.[1] If we add my own translation of Schleiermacher's idea into Spanish, and in Mexico, to all this layering, summing also the fact that Cole uses it in his own text to present the notion of "sympathy" in the interlinguistic transposition, which stems from the very poetic "An Essay on Translated Verse" (1684) by the Earl of Roscommon, the reader of these pages might be able to make sense of my employment of the metaphor of the Chinese boxes, presented at the beginning of this comment, to characterize both the proceedings of translation and the critical reflection that it provides. This situation, that of translating, is undoubtedly a complex one—even more so when one begins to wonder who it is who confers the genuine character to the translator, which are those individual natures of understanding and enjoyment of the translated text—which itself aspires to reach the status of "creative writing"—and, maybe, how it is that the translator attempts and manages to achieve the hypothetical "sympathy" between the readers and such a suggestive and yet evocatively subtle text as, for instance, the one here presented by Sara Baume. The endeavour to answer these questions is to be grounded, I think, in the virtue in which, in a nearly providential manner, Baume herself names in the title of her tale: *wisdom*. In Baume's case, wisdom is fused in an empiric and emotive knowledge of her environment, just as it is fused in her imaginative reach and talent to, literally, *translate* them into written language in a way that opens up the uncharted collective that discloses itself to those who read it in any context and at any time. The translator, on his behalf, is to construct and practice, by means of his proper interpretation of what the author provides and his proper understanding and insight, emanating from his reading experience, the character of a text that he makes his own, receptively and bounteously, so he can then offer it, to whoever wants to receive it, in a new tongue and a different context than those of its primeval conception.

[1] Peter Cole, "Making Sense in Translation," in *In Translation*, p. 7.

Baume's tale departs from an intimate perception and then advances into a shared experience of unprecedented events: the recognition of an intrinsic corporality in the midst of the incipient assimilation of the of the striking, and no less uncertain, consequences of a pandemic that determines the way of the world in the year 2020. Here, the sympathy between the author and translator is key—and fortuitous and fortunate too: we are both sharing, next to the rest of the planet, an adverse situation that implies both coincidence and circumstantial (re)cognition. While this, in principle, might suggest an advantage for the translator at the time of his labour, it too indicates the need to reach out to interpretative skills to attempt a transposition of, let us say, the detailed descriptions of the environment in the specificity of the tale—presumably an Irish semi-rural landscape—to a register that, in Spanish, evokes the tactile and visual qualities of a narrator obsessed with detail. How can the recurring transitions between the micro and the macro, between the inside and the outside, between what is one's own and what is the other's, be replicated without risking an imitative simplification? The use of pronominal verbs, inevitable perhaps in a Spanish tongue that aims at familiarity without disregarding morphosyntactic property, is of great help. In this way, when the house of the female narrator "shrinks" and "its edges soften," or when the edification "has become a miniature of itself," the objects in Spanish turn into the agents of their own imagined metamorphosis, particularizing (and even enhancing) in this way the grammar of inconclusion of English verbs that lack reflexivity, like "se encoge" in "our home *shrinks* behind us" or "se suavizan" in "its edges *soften*."

The "Wisdom" of Sara Baume is saturated with emotive implications and sensorial evocations. The density of the piece is evident in the miniature recreation of the cosmos that the narrator, in an expression of creativity which is apparently casual, projects as a means of transcendental escapism. The model of her house is a souvenir and not a vague *memento* of her own existence. The ending of the tale, in this sense, ought to keep in Spanish the almost ubiquitous reflection about the universal starting from the attention to the trivial and the banal: "Google Street View" and the "Fig Rolls" needed to keep being themselves, even when summoned in a language that is foreign to the one in which it was conceived, because in the intimate evocativeness of the story they are, at the same time, *other things*. They are the constituent parts of the anecdote, which is one and another in the opening and closing of Chinese boxes that translation entails. They are the components of what Lawrence Venuti would con-

sider being *simpatico*[2] at the time of translating. They are examples of a sympathy that, with some practical wisdom, this translator has wanted to construct between Sara Baume and her potential Spanish-speaking readers.

Translated into English by Carolina Ulloa.

[2] This Italian term implies, according to Lawrence Venuti, the possibility of "possessing an underlying sympathy." This is to say, the "translator should not merely get along with the author, not merely find him likeable; there should also be an identity between them" (*Vid.* L. Venuti, p. 273).

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A partir de un relato de Sara Baume: traducción, sabiduría y cajas chinas

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Mario Murgia

Traducir es un juego infinito de apertura de cajas chinas. Abrir unas, no obstante, implica también cerrar otras. Aquéllas que se cierran no necesariamente permanecen clausuradas para siempre, o siquiera por largo tiempo. En el proceso, esas cajas que por alguna buena razón se cerraron vuelven a abrirse, revelando así posibilidades inusitadas en su utilidad y beneficio iniciales. Las que se abrieron en un principio pueden también sellarse, no para mandar al olvido lo que de momento ofrecieron, sino para trocar sus dádivas iniciales en nuevos contenidos, matizados y aun suplidos, en la intimidad de una pausa necesaria, por silentes reconsideraciones que, al final, proyectan voces significativas (y con frecuencia atronadoras) en eventuales aperturas. El concierto de cajas chinas que se abren y se cierran sin parar, durante una traducción, halla ecos también en las maneras que idean los traductores mismos para dar seguimiento a su propia labor y, así, reafirmarla como expresión creativa y creadora de paisajes literarios, de figuraciones intelectuales.

Ya entrado en materia, y tratando de encontrar justificaciones rigurosas para mi traducción del anterior pasaje de la escritora irlandesa Sara Baume, me topé, tras muchos años de haberlo leído por primera vez, con el siguiente dicho: “El traductor genuino desea ocasionar que aquellas dos personas completamente separadas, su escritor y su lector, se reúnan al

fin; que el segundo llegue a entender y a disfrutar del primero tan correcta y plenamente como le sea posible, sin invitarlo a abandonar la esfera de su lengua materna". El redescubrimiento se lo debo al poeta y traductor estadounidense Peter Cole, quien, en su breve ensayo "Making Sense in Translation" cita el célebre comentario del filólogo alemán Friedrich Schleiermacher, traducido al inglés por el teórico y traductólogo belga André Lefevere.[1] Si a todo esto agregamos mi propia traducción al español, en México, de la idea de Schleiermacher, más el hecho de que Cole utiliza ésta en su texto para presentar la noción de "afinidad" (o *sympathy*) en el traslado interlingüístico, y a partir del poético "Ensayo sobre el verso traducido" (1684) del Conde de Roscommon, quien ahora lee podrá quizá explicarse mi utilización de la metáfora de las cajas chinas, al inicio de este comentario, para caracterizar tanto el procedimiento de la traducción como la reflexión crítica en cuanto a la misma. Se trata sin duda de una situación compleja, ésa de la traducción, sobre todo cuando uno comienza a preguntarse qué otorga el carácter de genuino al traductor, cuáles son las naturalezas individuales del entendimiento y del disfrute de un texto traducido —que además aspira a alcanzar el estatus de "obra de creación"— y, tal vez, cómo habrá el traductor de procurar, y aun conseguir, la hipotética "afinidad" entre los lectores y un texto tan sugerente y sutil en sus evocaciones como, por ejemplo, el que aquí se presenta de Sara Baume. El intento de responder a estas interrogantes habrá de fundarse, creo, en la virtud que, de manera casi providencial, nombra la misma Baume en el título de su relato: *wisdom*, o sabiduría. En el caso de la escritora, se funda esta sabiduría en un conocimiento empírico y emotivo de su entorno, así como de sus capacidades imaginativas y de su talento para, literalmente, *traducirlas* a la lengua escrita de manera que ésta se abra a la colectividad ignota de quienes lean en un contexto cualquiera, en un momento cualquiera. El traductor, por su parte, habrá de construir y ejercitar su propia sabiduría interpretativa a partir de lo que la autora presente y de lo que él mismo comprenda e *intuya*, a partir de su propia experiencia lectora, del carácter del texto que, receptiva y generosamente, hace suyo para luego donarlo, a quien quiera recibirlo, en una lengua nueva y en un contexto diferente al de su concepción primigenia.

El relato de Baume parte de una percepción íntima y luego se avecinda en una vivencia compartida de eventos inusitados: el reconocimiento de la propia corporeidad en medio de la incipiente asimilación de las chocantes, y no menos inciertas, consecuencias de una pandemia que determina el de-

[1] Peter Cole, "Making Sense in Translation," en *In Translation*, p. 7.

venir del mundo en el año 2020. Aquí, la afinidad entre autora y traductor es clave y, al mismo tiempo, casual y afortunada: ambos nos encontramos compartiendo, junto al resto del planeta, una situación adversa que implica tanto coincidencia como (re)conocimiento circunstancial. Si bien, en principio, esto puede significar una ventaja para uno a la hora de traducir, también se habrá de echar mano de la interpretación para intentar un traslado de, digamos, las detalladas descripciones del entorno particular del relato —presumiblemente un paraje semirrural irlandés— a un registro que, en español, evoque la tactilidad y la visualidad de una narradora obsesionada por el detalle. ¿Cómo se pueden replicar las repetidas transiciones entre lo micro y lo macro, entre el adentro y el afuera, y entre lo propio y ajeno sin arriesgarse a la simplificación imitativa? El uso de los verbos pronominales, inevitables acaso en un español que aspira a la familiaridad sin desconocer la propiedad morfosintáctica, es de gran ayuda. Así pues, cuando la casa de la narradora "se encoge" y "sus orillas se suavizan", o cuando la edificación "se convierte en una miniatura de sí misma", los objetos en español se convierten en agentes de sus propias e imaginadas metamorfosis, particularizando (y hasta potenciando) así la gramatical inconclusión de verbos ingleses que carecen de reflexividad, como *shrink* en "our home shrinks behind us", o *soften* en "its edges soften".

El "Wisdom" (¿*la* "wisdom"?) de Sara Baume está saturado de implicaciones emotivas y evocaciones sensibles. La densidad de la pieza queda de manifiesto en la recreación miniaturizada del cosmos que su narradora, en una expresión de creatividad aparentemente casual, proyecta como un modo de escapismo trascendente. La maqueta de su casa es un souvenir, que no un vago "recuerdo", de su propia existencia. El cierre del relato, en ese sentido, había de conservar en español la reflexión casi oblicua sobre lo universal a partir de la atención a lo nimio y lo banal: "Google Street View" y los "Fig Rolls" tenían que seguir siendo ellos mismos, aunque fueran convocados en una lengua ajena a la que los concibió, porque en la dimensión íntima del cuento son, al mismo tiempo, *otras cosas*. Son los constituyentes de la anécdota que es la misma y otra más en el abrir y cerrar de cajas chinas que implica la traducción. Son los componentes de lo que Lawrence Venuti considerara ser *simpático* al momento de traducir.[2] Son ejemplos de una afinidad que, con algo de sabiduría práctica, el traductor ha querido construir entre Sara Baume y sus potenciales lectores hispanoparlantes.

[2] El término es italiano, no español, y según Venuti denota la posibilidad de "poseer una simpatía subyacente". Es decir, "el traductor no sólo ha de llevarse bien con el autor, no simplemente ha de pensarlo agradable; también debe haber una identidad entre ambos" (*Vid.* L. Venuti, p. 273, mi traducción).

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Where does a Body Start? Translating and Staging *Una niña es una cosa a medio formar* by Eimear McBride; Adapted for the Stage by Annie Ryan

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Pía Laborde-Noguez
Adriana Toledano Kolteniuk[1]

"The fluidity of being, in the stream of becoming,
and that sees it ‹from within›."
Alia Al—Saji

What is it to perform an image, to make it happen?

In *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing,* a girl is confronted with the fragmentation of her identity due to the violent world that surrounds her: an extremely religious mother, a long-gone father, a brother who suffers a brain disease, and her own turbulent sexuality. It is a story about loss, grief, pain and the alienation of one's identity, an intimate tale that rises, like a voracious body, out of its own self-destruction. It offers the shattering truth of the protagonist's struggles since girlhood into womanhood be-

[1] Special thanks to the entire team, without which the staging of the play and the reflections contained in this essay would not have been possible. Authors Eimear McBride and Annie Ryan; Director Juan Miranda; Stage Designer Manuela de Laborde; Sound Designers Camila de Laborde and Daniel Hermann-Collinni; Assistant Director Montserrat Cattaneo; Light Designer Elisabet Castells i Negre.

cause of predetermined social constructions on femininity and the pervasiveness of male violence.

Originally a novel by Eimear McBride, and winner of several awards including the Kery Group Irish Novel of the Year, the Goldsmiths Prize, and The Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction; it was adapted to the stage by Annie Ryan, and described by *The New York Times* as "a ghostly play. The body is barely there. More phantasm that person, and at first you might mistake it for a shadow".[2] Our project involved the first translation of the text into Spanish and its theatrical staging premiered on the 3rd of August 2019 at the Tamayo Museum of Contemporary Art in Mexico City.

The internal nature of our proposal was the juxtaposition of image and sound; the relationship that always occurs between the boundaries of memory, speech, body and lived experience. An open geography is displayed through the very textual framework, loaded with outer voices, gaps and traces, undoing the separation between form and content.

McBride's vocabulary is simple, albeit not easy to digest. It travels inside you, touches you deeply with its truthfulness and comes out never having formed as articulated speech. There are nearly no descriptions in the novel, and it manages to explore the limits of language to express the human experience. Her innovative and experimental language offers a new expressiveness of dialogue in the contemporary theatre scene. Its corporality has an impact both on the interpreter and on the receiver, and our translation was intended to preserve the empiric quality of both.

Since the creative proposal is sustained *a priori* by the dramatic text, we were interested in seeing how the language pierces and habilitates the body for the narrative to advance. In the search for those spaces between words where performance filters through and multiplies, the action is subtly revealed, the plot forces one to inhabit the stage to simply let language organically unfold. The erratic pauses and the potency of the language create a latent effect or impression that the entire monologue is one long-winded statement uttered in some sort of timeless space; perhaps in the last moments when the Girl is in the lake she inhabits the verbal memories of the life she has had, of this body and identity that is fragmented until at the very end her name is gone: "That was just life. And now. / What? / My name is gone".[3]

What happens then when the body manifests through its mere presence, with the violence, the sweat and the pathos of its flesh? We investigated

[2] Ben Brantley, *Review: 'A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing' Is a Ghostly Play*, par. 1.
[3] Eimear McBride, *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing,* adapted for the stage by Annie Ryan, p. 62.

the specific corporality of an impulsive and passionate body, a body that has been stolen and torn. The body of the text defines the body of the movement. We were searching for that vertiginous point where the immense contact joins the tiny one, where the inconceivable joins the deformed. An exploited body. An explosion that is detonated in multiple directions and still holds the condensation and vibration of the small.

With the movement of language as a starting point[4] —its dramaturgy, rhythm, impulses, sounds, pauses, silences— we thought of treating the text as a music score, as the language of a body and the body of a voice; words left as traces, as gestures and emotions. In our investigation the most important scenic stage was to be the body: its musicality, its movements, and its relationship to the space. We did not mark a separation between the text and its movement, as we were conscious that synergy was to sculpt our *performance text,* guiding us through the various elements needed for the conception of our production; a stage design that would work as an extension of the body and further the corporality of the performance, the use of light to recall spaces in the story and modulate situations and relations, and sound as atmosphere manifested as a *mode-of-being* of the world. These elements were to be interwoven with the voice's role as the bearer of direct experience, as the 'soul' of our piece; the story was to take form in the *felt-body* of the audience who were to complete the play, which we were mindful to leave open for the unique perspective of each single gaze.

Through our work we looked for the emergence of a multiplicity of senses, working with the notion of voice and speech as presence, and the word as an instrument of action to give rise to the play's spatiality. Our intention was to exceed the individual body or conscious subject, pertaining instead to the overall situation in which various bodies cohere. Our non-linear, interdisciplinary and collaborative process did not conclude when we finished the translation or when it was finally performed. It continues through the self-reflexive exercise of describing our creative process and will be constantly re-signified through performing it again. We found ourselves, and find ourselves now throughout this reflection, circling back on our own interdisciplinary explorations, exactly as what occurred with our translation and in rehearsals. Every single variable affected the whole process. The theatrical staging, beyond the translation, constantly destabilized our notions of language and its many mediums and tonalities.

[4] Dmitry Merezhkovsky *apud* Fernando Poyatos, *Textual Translation and Live Translation: The Total Experience of Nonverbal Communication in Literature, Theater and Cinema*, p. 69.

With the novel and its adaptation, we began delving into all the worlds the narrative explored. How to recognize the traces of a story? Where to look for clues to allow us to reconstruct it, or the signs which give away its journey? We focused on the logic of the broken. We worked on the idea of limits and excess. How to travel in the narrative, and create logic through a fractured speech from a fractured body in a fractured setting? Through the continuity of the discontinuous, the unified flow of experiences concealed in the intermittent nature of our thoughts – where the void lurks, and roads split, where clarity resides (or self-appoints itself), and direction perseveres.

Translating McBride's Language

To situate ourselves within the framework of Translation Studies, we consulted James Holmes' foundational text *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies* and found that our methodological inclination was towards process-oriented Descriptive Translation Studies, without losing sight of function-oriented DTS, since the translator is always to consider the recipient culture and audience in every decision made. This exercise challenged our very notion of what translation was, and we started seeing translation everywhere: starting with the novel that itself is the translation of a very complex reality of violence and its effect on a young girl's body and subjectivity; the act of translating what is already a translation between media; translating cultures; translating between creatives what we imagine and encounter; translating the translation to the stage, and translating now to our own selves, through memory, research, and critical analysis, what we can understand from this experience as a whole, about how each part of the creative process is an exercise in re-writing.

Fernando Poyatos, in his book *Textual Translation and Live Translation,* uses the following fragmented Merezhkovsky quote as the epigraph to his chapter on the act of reading: "we experience in the muscles and nerves directing the expressive gestures of our own bodies, upon reading similar descriptions [...] And, by means of this sympathetic experience involuntarily going on in our own bodies [...] we enter into their internal world. We begin to live with them and in them".[5] Poyatos goes on to say, that "our reception of the narrative text would be most limited if we did not acknowledge, beyond what the writer wittingly offered us, the implicit textual evo-

[5] *Idem.*

cations".[6] The search for these "evocations" was central to our exploration, through the effects of words on our bodies and imaginative responses. The process of rehearsal informed the translation in a way that rarely happens in purely written translations: it made us acutely aware of all of the non-verbal and suggestive elements contained in the language itself as well as the demands of a text that is to be staged, and the temporality in which it can function for a spectator, and how we desired for that to happen.

In our search for the non-verbal "evocations" we carried out an organic exploration through the body, not through a rational or directed intentionality to understand the Girl or to recreate her experience, but to feel her instead, to inhabit her, becoming receptacles of the language in our own bodies. Sound works as a sense magnifier, and the body of the actor as a soundboard to test the efficiency of the translation. We must understand an organic exploration as one that is neither embellished, nor encrypted, nor artificially or forcefully completed. McBride's language is organic in that it is unfiltered, spasmodic, and comes to us directly from the Girl's embodied perception.

Almost nothing in the book is described, only blurted out; McBride manages to explore the limitations of language in expressing human experience, as well as the limitations between verb and adjective, between action, reaction, and narration. As Shadia Abdel-Rahman Téllez observes, "in order to reflect the difficulty to translate the protagonist's embodied subjectivity into verbal language, the author has devised and experimented with different narrative, symbolic and linguistic elements, resulting in the writing of a novel-long stream of consciousness, in which the perspectives adopted by the narrator defy realism".[7] It is no coincidence that both author and adapter studied acting, which transpires in the way McBride employs literary devices and in Ryan's eye and ear to envision stage adaptation.

Inside under Jesus I make my dash out in the rain. Slap mud all up my socks. I'll skid it. Scutter it. Being magic. Saying fucker Christ. Into the fields. My words best collection. Stupid shit fuck piss cow bitch frig

Adentro abajo de Jesús salgo como rayo afuera a la lluvia. Salpico todo de lodo mis calcetines. Patino. Me apuro. Siendo magia. Diciendo Cristo hijo de la chingada. Hacia el campo. Mis groserías la mejor colección.

[6] *Idem*.

[7] Shadia Abdel-Rahman Téllez, "The Embodied Subjectivity of a Half-Formed Narrator: Sexual Abuse, Language (Un)formation and Melancholic Girlhood in Eimear McBride's *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing*", p. 3.

gershiter fucker bitch pig. All the things my mother never taught me. To shit in a field or run in from the rain. So I knew it always then and do it all the time. Oh crouch. Dock leaf. Plopped. True I could be killed for that. And a white one too. Should not have been licking chalk.[8]	Pendejo mierda chingar meados vaca perra caliente cagada puta perra cerda. Todas las cosas que mi madre nunca me enseñó. Cagar en el campo o entrar corriendo del aguacero. Así que lo supe siempre entonces y lo hago todo el tiempo. Ay me agacho. Plantitas. Cago. Cierto me podrían matar por eso. Sale una caca blanca también. No debí lamer tanto gis.

A task which was of outmost importance to stay true to the corporality of McBride's use of language was to consider each word, each utterance—be it the invasion of an external voice, physical contact or an intense emotion—as a corporeal experience. Her use of language makes us the receptacle of constant sensory stimuli evoking smells, tastes, and the atmosphere of places referenced—such as a funeral venue, a dining room, a church. The previous example illustrated, in just a few charged words, the Girl's relationship to her body, her senses, and the world around her; her innocence and playfulness as well as her rebellious spirit formed as a reaction to her punitive upbringing.

Sound was the quality of language that was the most difficult to translate, because of McBride's corporeal use of it, but also because of important phonetic and semantic differences between Spanish and English. In the passage quoted above, it can be easily observed that it often takes more words in Spanish to convey what is being conveyed in English. However, it was even more defying to translate particular passages where the bodily trauma is at its deepest and the disintegration of the Girl's notion of self at its peak. We are let into the Girl's mental process; we join her in the experience of her painful disintegration and loss of identity. The following is an example from the scene when the Girl returns to the forest, seeking the soldier that her uncle punched a few hours before as he discovered the soldier was about to "have her". This extract is from when the soldier is raping and hurting her viciously:

Grougedbreth scald my lung stil I. pukblodd over mef rum. mY nose	Tragar respirchup mis pulmones hasta que. Vomitsanggrr encima de

[8] E. McBride, *op. cit.* p. 20.

my mOuth I. VOMit. Clear. CleaR. HestopS up gETs. Stands uP. Look. And I breath And I breath my. I make.[9]	mí de. mI nariz mi bOca yo. VOMito. Claro.ClaRo. Él parA se pARa. LevanTA. Mira. Y yo respiro. Y yorespiro mi. Yo creo.

We navigated from actively exploring the corporality of language in the original text, followed by a physical improvisation in Spanish to find the right embodiment for its translation. What might have felt like rehearsing the play in English, eventually led to its bilingual transposition. We were convinced that the sense of estrangement in the language was transposable to Spanish. The translation process was parallel to the rehearsal process which involved a continuous re-writing of both the written and the performance text. The translation would be advanced, and embodied by the actor in rehearsals where the scenic script began to take shape. In collaboration with the director, the actor would "translate" back to the translator the obstacles that had come up and which highlighted the incompleteness of a certain interpretation or rendition. New, more profound understandings of the complexity of McBride's language and Annie Ryan's adaptation arose. Sometimes the issues were solved in that same rehearsal, sometimes in the translator's mind, meditating afterwards on the information given to her by the actor and director. Then the whole process would repeat itself. Both of us, translator and actor, were essentially co-translators during this part of the process.

As evidenced above, translation was a process of re-writing on many levels. Naturally, whenever the prefix "re" is present, an approach to words as memory is relevant, of words as the traces of experience that cause the most impact on the body and psyche. In *The Wounded Storyteller*, Arthur W. Frank writes that:

> the voices that speak to us at particular moments in our lives, especially during transitions or crises, imprint themselves with a force that later voices never quite displace […] the past is remembered with such arresting lucidity because it is not being experienced as past; the illness experiences that are being told are unassimilated fragments that refuse to become past, haunting the present.[10]

There is a multiplicity of voices inside the Girl's head: what she stores consciously and unconsciously in her mind, what she remembers and what

[9] *Ibid.,* p. 56.
[10] Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics,* p. 60.

she chooses to forget. As these become memories by the instant, they're bound to hold a level of distortion. What does the girl do to overcome an unpleasant experience? She reconstructs it as something different, she ignores it, or she indulges in it. Construction, deconstruction, fragmentation, alienation. Along these lines of thought, each member of the team investigated, within their own creative language, how to conceptualize their part of the landscape we were all to play with during rehearsals.

Both in the novel and its adaptation, there's a feeling that between the voice that speaks and that which it speaks about there is, aside from the relation between the "natural" and the "immediate", an entire dimension of interventions and conversations which intertwine in the solitude of the narrator, and the construction of unshared thoughts. The Girl is positioned in the liminal space between formation and dissolution where the interventions invade not only her body but also her consciousness. The sexual encounters are coated with doubt, with an interrogation, a suspicion. Sexuality functions as the engine of a search. Is it a means towards empowerment or a distancing of ones' own truth? As the story unfolds, we witness the disintegration of her identity as a young woman is rendered alive by the fragmented language of narration, a consequential symptom of the dissolution of her subjectivity, her transformation into a *half-formed thing.*

There is no distinction between the Girl's own thoughts and the words of others, just as there is no clear distinction between what is felt by the audience and what the Girl experiences. The language carries bodily pain when she is in the forest with a man for the last time —as in the quoted example above— and as seen through the disengagement from her body during her last instance with her uncle in the bathroom when, about to take a bath, she's interrupted. The lack of spaces between words not only embodies the physical pain she undergoes, but also the materiality of the water's fluidity.

Oh no nononono. I don'twant. Want.	Ay no nononono. No quiero. Quiero.
Quiet pet.	Calla cachorra.
There he does it. Stich it ionethe-don'tinside	Y allí va y lo hace. Mete enallínoadentro
Sthroughmythrough	Enmiiiienmiiiiiii
Can't smell this room.[11]	No puedo oler este cuarto.

[11] E. McBride, *op. cit.,* p. 59.

From a technical stance, McBride uses monosyllables often not arranged as correct grammatical sentences. Sounds fall in a narrow range, and pace and rhythm seem at times to match the metric requirements of poetry. There's a temporal continuity as she mixes past, present and future, which maintains a sustained sense of loss and melancholy throughout the story. Nouns are often used as verbs and verbs are often used in their bare form, making the natural hold eminence over the cultural. This particular characteristic of the language touches on why, although the original story is set in Ireland, it was so easily transposable to another culture, its impact remaining similar in resonance.

The Scenic Language of **Una niña es una cosa a medio formar**

"Postdramatic theatre again and again transgresses the pain threshold in order to revoke the separation of the body from language and to reintroduce into the realm of spirit —voice and language— the painful and pleasurable physicality that Julia Kristeva has called the semiotic within the signifying process".[12] The expressive body of the actor is the space in which the dynamic changes of the story are imprinted. This is why dramaturgical work relied greatly on the body of the actor, her performance, and the movement of the text as spoken through her corporality.

Dramaturgy is what moves the idea of linearity forward, yet wanting to avoid a singularity of sense, we embarked on exploring diverse dramaturgical structures simultaneously. Through physicalizing the words, we found the corporeality to the sensations of images imprinted in the body of the actor. Thereby the unloading of the primeval sense to the words followed, filled with emotion and feeling for the listeners' ear and *felt-body*. The next step was textualizing the words: the primeval word carries an intimacy, a volume of a soft and excessive flow —strident, explosive, and gentle— appropriated by the actor and the situation. Such word is irreducible because it is a promise which seals a face of multiple sensations provoked by the image unfolded by the actor. The word is ambiguously what opens and simplifies. Then, the rhythm's architecture: to learn how to ratio the flow of words and their feeling in the body and the space. For this we played with the limits of speech, physical interruptions, accidents,

[12] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p. 96.

distortion, and the perversion of the senses, thus helping us to construct narrational architectures founded on the action of the story, through the association of images joined together.

We sense the world in the form of a bodily response, and we have access to that knowledge only by living it: "I lend my ear or I look awaiting a sensation, and suddenly the sensible takes hold of my ear or my gaze, and I give over a part of my body, to this particular manner of vibrating and filling the space".[13] Whereby how were we to render service to the text through the space, the lighting, and the sound design? What was earned through the stage adaptation of the novel that the staging of our translation could offer? For each creative to respond to the text through their bodies, rehearsals were to compromise everyone involved in the project. Yet, we were to treat each of their fields of work as a separate body of information: co-dependent on the others, yet comprising of its own language, knowledge, ways of relating, and expressivity. Through contrasting and individual ways of vibrating, we were to build a web of tension from which our story would hang, similar to the three string mobiles that were suspended from the structure. Making these mobiles required gentleness and care, yet a consistent tension to hold them in unison. Painted with multiple colours, they would interact with the lighting, their drawings morphing into different figures; just as one acts differently depending the situation, or just as an animal hides or adapts when seeking survival.

Strongly inspired by the architecture of Richard Neutra, the design proposal was constructed to morph throughout the play and adapt itself to the narrative changes we were yet to find. It was intended to create multiple spaces, yet remain open to conceptual thresholds for proposals given by the performer's embodiment of the text. "The space functions *chronometrically.* At the same time, it becomes a *place of traces:* the events remain present in their traces after they have happened and passed, time becomes denser".[14] Through the use of the space, the Girl and her consciousness were drawn through traces encircling the constructed metal structure, movements which were to be quickly abandoned and taken over by a new and sudden impulse, her life interfering and new cracks appearing, the Girl slowly breaking. In sound, this was achieved through the echo of the falling drops seeping into the next scene where the Girl is last confronted and ridiculed by her mother. The drops as traces of the pain forced on the Girl's body

[13] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* p. 212.
[14] H. T. Lehmann, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

by her uncle the scene before replicate the effect of receiving a blow and moments later still hearing the thumping in your ears.

We investigated the difference between moving from inertia and moving because of necessity; to move until exacerbation, until the image is exhausted of itself and its limiting contours are exceeding. To move repeatedly until the conscience of time is modified and the body expresses itself freely. We asked ourselves, which is the necessity that makes it move? Suddenly not only the body was giving meaning to the built metal structure, but also the structure was feeding the story with a system and world of its own. For example, its main pole, that disrespecting the *fourth wall,* was placed centre downstage. This created a rupture in the space and supported the depth of the vanishing lines upstage, but most importantly it split the homogeneity of spectatorship as at times it restricted the view of what was happening on stage, or better still, it played within such restriction. The pole became the game when looking around for the kids at school, the pole became that hesitance when wishing to but having nowhere to hide. This was all discovered to our surprise during rehearsals, because initially the structure was built to play the sole role of background, and we feared it would distract the audience from the text. However, the structure actually offered dimension to the spaces created by the language. The expressive body remained as the main fictional stage of our piece, but the structure gave continuity and rupture to its gestures.

For sound, the primary data sought was also performance based. The first time the team met, the play was read by the actor and recorded. That was to be the body of information for the sound designers, through which they connected geophysical and biological landscapes, most times foreign to our consciousness. A soundscape that was to touch the body, but not necessarily connect with a palpable reality in the mind. Sound has the power to penetrate situations, manifesting as atmosphere exceeding the conscious subject. The atmospheres created challenged our notion of spatiality and environment. Although at times we couldn't understand them, we could feel them. It was like a sudden and unknown search through our senses. "Instead of asking how a body affects and is affected by music and sound, atmosphere suggests we think of music and sound using the logic of climatic states and environmental transitions", affirms Torvinen.[15] To which Johann Gottfried wrote, furthering our understanding, that climate has "an impact on the totality of things rather than on individual entities, [it]

[15] Torvinen *apud* Friendlin Reidel and Juha Torvinen, *Music as Atmosphere: Collective Feelings and Affective sounds. Postdramatic Theatre,* p. 4.

impacts the individual through the totality."[16] An example of this is what we created for the scene when the Girl is having dinner with her mum, bother, aunt and uncle: the added nauseating sound of eating that gradually loses form, suddenly makes you feel as if the Girl is seeing everything from below, deep down as if in the stomach of her aunt. Her voice as echo one step behind from the apparent conversation they're having over dinner is meant to evoke the sensation of having fainted and being able to hear everything, but in a way that it feels distant. The food noises we added were of someone disturbingly eating something viscid. A noise that has no accompanying image, and is placed in juxtaposition with the scene, causes a heightened bodily sensation of awkwardness in both the performer and the audience.

The descriptions and compositional principles we have shared with readers so far have been thought out for this reflection, yet they were most of the time unknown to us throughout the process. We were interested in tools that would guide the spectator unconsciously, and we think that happened with us too. We believe part of the creative process is getting lost in it, losing sight of one's goals or objectives, and not giving into the tendency of rationalizing creative decisions. We were aware that the experience we were seeking was to be completed by the audience, to occur through the performer-audience complicity. Similar to the novel, the staging was to be an experience understood through feeling. For that to happen there needed to be ambiguity and contradictions, otherwise it was to be too comfortably analysable and consequently easy to detach from one's self. We would reach this focusing on what McBride's language told us from the beginning: it was to be experiential, the audience was to undergo the Girl's suffering.

Thereby we added layers of meaning to enrich the bond that was to be created with the audience. It was something we played with in rehearsals, sometimes such tiny details that most often it was purely to help the performer create means of relating on stage, with herself, the characters and her audience. It was a way of creating the ground on which she was to stand. In retrospect we believe it unconsciously and indirectly nurtured the audience's *felt-body*. To better exemplify this, it helps to think of the text, aside from what is being said and communicated, as thoughts that are thrown at the audience, a constant exchange that is not to stop throughout. When, where and how do these thoughts land? There's the tempo of the Girl's thinking, but also the resonance in which the performer

[16] Herder *apud idem*

needs to vibrate in order to sense the rhythm of each performance and its specific audience. The play starts, and everyone needs to be on their toes.

We explored countless *what if's*, so as to find these layers that would create depth and breadth in the play. What if the performer paused mid-sentence, to turn to an audience member and address her individually or even repeat herself? Or if the performer whispered as if the Girl had a secret she didn't want anyone to hear? What if the performer imagined her body was trapped saying the text forever as if having fallen into a spell? How would that pain manifest in the deliverance of the text? Or what if she was to play the Girl as if what she desired the most was right behind her, but turning around might worsen her brother's illness? What if the Girl were to see the memory of her brother hidden in the audience, or recognized in the furthest backseat someone who looked like her long-gone father? All these things can help the performer find other ways of communicating that are not necessarily linked to what exists, but root her in a presence that empathizes with her surroundings.

One of these explorations that was kept in the staging of our translation was that in the first scene we decided that, while saying the text, the performer would simultaneously be checking-out the audience. Little by little she would transcend into the realm of the story. Or more specifically, in one of the few lines the father has before abandoning his family, while the Girl is still in her mother's womb, and the doctor informs them that their little boy will need chemotherapy: "But we'll never be rid do you understand?"[17] As she spoke that line, the performer instantly switched into playing her father, as if bewitched by the painful memory. Through checking-out the audience before, the Girl made the audience complicit in her story from the beginning of the play. As when with someone close, through an exchange of gazes, something is communicated without having to speak. Maybe in the case of the audience, that first gaze was responded with hesitation, but that is enough to conjointly start experiencing together, in this case with what was to occur on stage. Relationships were established as a way of giving the audience an active role in what they were about to witness.

We have spoken in several moments throughout this essay about the Girl's disintegration in terms of her subjectivity and identity; however, as the remarks from *The New York Times* article we cited point out, it is a "ghostly" play and the body is shown to be like a shadow and "barely

[17] E. McBride, *op. cit.,* p. 16.

there". This is an element of McBride's language that any spectator of the play will take away with them because it is transmitted through scenic language and presence, but only a careful reader of the book or play will take note of how little the Girl actually articulates any intentional embodiment of her identity, and even more so, how she actually never describes her emotions. When an experience affects her body, like the multiple rapes or beatings she suffers or even the insults from her mother, she narrates the physical pain, but the emotional pain is only expressed through her actions and reactions or by the words she yells when upset. She never self-reflects on how this affects her, there is never a "this made me feel sad", "this made me feel abandoned by my mother", not even expressed in a suggestive or poetic way. Even in the moment of most honest and open communication with her uncle when they speak of the unspeakable, and he asks her if she is angry, the Girl is unable to respond, although she clearly transmits an emotion in her previous sardonic statement, which provokes her uncle's question:

> You haven't damaged me if you're afraid of. Haven't soiled my goods.
> You're angry.
> I'm not. I am not. I.
> You've got beautiful.
> Well you know growing up does that.[18]

When the uncle changes the subject to flatter her with a compliment, she responds in a way that shields her emotions even more so. She does not give in to the flattery, and changes the subject herself, steering away from her emotional state. After the interaction, she does not express anything about how the encounter made her feel. The Girl evades herself as all of the figures in her life have always evaded her 'problematic' dimensions, which are really just inevitable aspects of being a Girl. The Girl's only name and identity is being a Girl, a Girl who is a sister, a daughter, a granddaughter, a student, a friend, a niece. She is a Girl who has only known a true and sincere connection with her brother at a very young age and his disease creates a shadow within her that only grows as the play advances. She never fully forms as a Girl, so is unable to even begin to form as a woman. The Girl grows up to do 'woman' things, but the identity that ends up fragmented is an identity that was never fully formed in the

[18] E. McBride, *op. cit.* p. 40.

first place. The identity and the embodiment we get are composed of multiple voices and multiple invasive bodies, multiple unwanted sensations and misguided desires. The body is never a shell, a refuge, a source of wholeness… the body is everything and therefore, impossible to pin down.

This is why intersubjectivity is such an important element of this performance text. When an identity is not fully formed, it is easily penetrated by other identities, it easily echoes other voices and confuses the treatment received from others as an integral part of the self, of one's mode of being in the world. The dramatic exercise of a formerly narrated experience (though already dramatic in its corporeal nature) inspires reflections about where the body begins and where it ends, about the connection between the body and space, body and other bodies, body and voice, body and memory. There are many critical readings to be developed that could focus on a myriad of aspects: from the characters (all imprinted in the Girl), to the way the scenic resources help accentuate the subtleties in the text, or to feminist readings on the treatment of violence and sexual abuse in the text and the employment of the Girl's agency (or lack thereof).

This essay is of a self-reflective nature and focused on the process of the translation and staging of *Una niña es una cosa a medio formar*. Yet we know each collaborator in the project could easily add a different and valuable reading on the work we embarked on with this play. It was clear to us from the beginning that there was a strong stance against disciplinary isolation in every sense of the term and we believe *that* played a crucial role in the result of our project. We knew working collectively without hierarchy was the only way to engage in the open and multifocal communication that such a complex text and staging process required. Just as it is expressed in the poem by Roberto Juarroz:

We must reach for that gaze
That looks at one like it was two.
And then looks at two
As if they were one.
And later still
Looks at one and at two as if they were none.
It is the gaze that at once writes and erases,
That draws and suspends the lines,

Hay que alcanzar esa mirada
Que mira a uno como si fuera dos.
Y después mira a dos
Como si fueran uno.
Y luego todavía
Mira a uno y a dos como si fueran ninguno.
Es la mirada que escribe y borra al mismo tiempo,
Que dibuja y suspende las líneas,

That disassociates and unites
Simply gazing.
The gaze that is not different
Outside the dream or within it.
The gaze without intermediate zones.
The gaze that creates itself as it gazes.

Que disasocia y une
Simplemente mirando.
La mirada que no es diferente
Afuera y adentro del sueño.
La mirada sin zonas intermedias.
La mirada que se crea a sí misma al mirar.[19]

[19] Roberto Juarroz, "Hay que alcanzar esa mirada", p. 91; translation by Adriana Toledano Kolteniuk.

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PART III
STUDY ASSIGNMENTS AND FURTHER READING

Musical Cartography. The Narrative Structure of "Sirens"

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Luz Aurora Pimentel

Study Assignments

- Read the episode "Sirens" in *Ulysses* by Joyce and also Luz Aurora Pimentel's article in this book. Pay special attention to the barmaids in the bar of the Ormond Hotel, and write an essay where you answer the following question: In which ways did Joyce transform or rewrite the figure of the Sirens from Homer's *Odyssey* when writing this episode in his novel?
- Terence Killeen, in his chapter on "Sirens" in *Ulysses Unbound*, states: [T]here is, I feel, in the episode, an atmosphere of repressed hysteria, a 'will to power', that affects its entire presentation. There is clear reason for this: this is the hour, in the course of the day, when Boylan's fateful assignation with Molly takes place. The text as a whole, and not just Bloom, is striving to cope with this painful fact; it is being narrated, because it has to be, but elaborate textual games are being staged to divert attention from its import, if not from its actuality.[1]

[1] Terence Killeen, "Sirens", 126.

Write an essay in which you comment on this quotation. Support your ideas with quotations from *Ulysses* by Joyce, and also from Pimentel's article.

► Read "Ulises. Estructura y técnicas narrativas" in *Joyce: el oficio de escribir*, by Giorgio Melchiori,[2] and answer the following questions:

1. In which ways does the reading of Melchiori's chapter change your perspective on "Sirens" by Joyce, or *Ulysses* as a whole?
2. Melchiori states that "Wandering Rocks", "Sirens" and "Cyclops" should be read as a triad, a set of closely related episodes (vid. 179-180). Identify at least one way in which the interconnectedness of these three episodes might be evidenced.

► Follow Pimentel's idea of a cartographic reading of *Ulysses* and locate the events in "Wandering Rocks" on a Dublin map. Once you have done that, see if any interesting figure emerges in a paratextual fashion. If so, write a brief essay in which you explain why such a cartographical reading might reveal an extra layer of meaning in relation to the Joycean text. The following link is one of the sources which may help with the location of fictional events on the city map: <https://rosenbach.org/blog/mapping-ulysses/>

► Read the following texts and then write an essay after the instructions below:

1. Read the episode "Cyclops" in *Ulysses* by Joyce.
2. Read Harry White's "The Imperium of Music"[3] in *Voices on Joyce*.
3. Harry White, in "The Imperium of Music", analyses the importance of music in James Joyce's writings. In the second section of his chapter, he states that "[i]t is 'Cyclops', more than any other episode in *Ulysses*, which affirms Joyce's creative reliance on musical paradigms as a means of fictional discourse".[4] Write an essay in which you discuss the previous quotation.

[2] Giorgio Melchiori, "Ulises. Estructura y técnicas narrativas", pp. 173-180.
[3] Harry White, "The Imperium of Music". *Voices on Joyce*, pp. 107-117.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

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Variations on a Joycean Theme: John Cage's Readings, Re-writings, More Re-Readings, and Visitations of *Finnegans Wake*

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Susana González Aktories

Study Assignments

1. Read John Cage's edition of *mesostics* in relationship with *Finnegans Wake* at the following link: https://monoskop.org/images/c/cf/Cage_John_Writing_through_Finnegans_Wake_1978.pdf
   Based on your reading…
   a. Define the different intertextual relationships established in the texts. At least, take into consideration the following four levels: a.) the paratextual level, in terms of the allusion to *Finnegans Wake* in the title; b.) the lexical level, via the retrieval of key words and Joycean neologisms in the text (in an electronic version of Joyce's oeuvre find and define at least five, and specify in which section they can be found); c.) the level of *mise en page*, given the acrostic that spells out the author's name; and d.) the level of sonorousness that Cage attributes to Joyce's work.
   b. To what extent do Cage's versions facilitate the access to Joyce's work? To answer the question, discuss Cage's piece as a 'rewriting', 'reappropriation', 'adaptation', and 'translation', from prose into verse, among other possibilities.

c. Can these mesostic rewritings be considered 'poems'? Develop your argument based on any poetical resources you may find in the pieces.
d. Think of the *wing words* as specific poetical resources in themselves and analyse an example. You may use Marjorie Perloff's text as a starting point: http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/authors/perloff/cage.html
e. Choose a fragment from Cage's mesostic series and write a comment about what may be gained or lost in a silent reading of it. Please resort to its *mise en page* and bear in mind that there are two kinds of performativity —the visual performativity of the text as it appears on the page, and the sonic one, which decodes the text as a musical notation.
f. Refer to John Cage's own reading at https://vimeo.com/20851154. Based on the printed text, comment on three different features that make the author's reading different from the *mise en page*.

2. Listen to a recorded edition of the *Roaratorio* (here is a link to that effect: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdHe4c10smY) and…
   a. Try to distinguish the discursive levels or planes in the piece, e. g., Cage's voice when reading/reciting his piece, the recorded incidental voices, the sounds constituting a particularly Irish "sonic landscape," etc. What are these? Are they rural? Urban? What about the instruments?
   b. Write a comment on the relationship between this piece and Joyce's work. Can it be considered a radio-novel because it narrates an action? Or does it present a sequence of disarrayed impressions? What can be inferred from Cage's own design for this kind of composition, if we follow his manual ____, ____ ____ *Circus on* ____ (the reference to this manual can be found in the further reading section)?
   c. How do these sonic pieces relate to the literary work they stem from? Can they be considered sonorisations, musicalisations of the work? To what extent do they reflect Joyce's own interest in sound? Please remember that Joyce expresses an interest in the effects of sound in both *Finnegans Wake* and *Ulysses*. How can students of literature approach Joyce's work through Cage's creations?
   d. Try to link *Roaratorio* to other contemporary sonic works you may know, and discuss different sound resources such as sampling and looping.

3. Finally, what other re-presentations can you imagine based on Cage's work? You may think of, for example, a staging or a sonic installation, a sonic or an audio-visual performance, or a painting. What resources can be used in these cases?

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Classical-yet-Current Resources for Literary and Musical Studies

Scher, Steven Paul, *Essays on Literature and Music (1967-2004)*. Edited by Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf. Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2004. (Word and Music Studies, 5).

The following essays are especially useful when trying to define literary and musical studies: "Literature and Music" (1982), pp. 173-201, and "Theory in Literature, Analysis in Music: What Next?" (1983), pp. 203-222. For other relevant topics, see "Acoustic Experiment as Ephemeral Spectacle? Musical Futurism, Dada, Cage and Talking Heads (1994), pp. 433-449.

Scher, Steven Paul (ed.), *Music and Text: Critical Inquiries*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Especially the wonderfully current essay "Music and Literature: the Institutional Dimensions," pp. 3-20; or "Chord and Discourse: Listening Through the Written Word" by Peter J. Rabinowitz, pp. 38-56.

Works on Music and Literature with References to Other Irish Experimental Artists

LODATO, Suzanne M., and David Francis Urrows (eds.), *Essays on Music and the Spoken Word and on Surveying the Field*. Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2005. (Word and Music Studies, 7).

In particular, the texts by Werner Wolf, "Language and/or Music as Man's 'Comfort'? Beckett's Metamedial Allegary Words and Music", pp. 145-163 and Stephen Benson, "Beckett, Feldman, Joe and Bob: Speaking of Music in Words and Music", pp. 165-180.

A Classical Reference for Intersemiotic Studies

STEINER, Wendy (ed.), *The Sign in Music and Literature*. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.

Sources connected with experimental, oral, and sonic poetry

An Anthology with Critical and Historiographic Texts (Also Referencing the European Avant-Garde), As Well As Studies on the Artists' Poetics:

BULATOV, Dmitri (ed.), *Homo Sonorus. Una antología internacional de poesía sonora*. Mexico City, CONACULTA, Radio Educación, 2004.

The original English edition is the following:

——— (ed.), *Homo Sonorus. An International Anthology of Sound Art*. Kaliningrad, National Center for Contemporary Art, 2001.

From the Anthropological Viewpoint, based on Ruth Finnegan's Insights

MILES FOLEY, John, *How to Read and Oral Poem*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2002.

By Bernstein, from the Pennsound Group, Here Is a Very Useful Resource

BERNSTEIN, Charles (ed.), *Close Listening. Poetry and the Performed Word*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998.

There are here remarkable texts by Perloff and Johanna Drucker, among many others that will prove to be of great educational value.

From an Anecdotal and Retrospective, Yet Useful, Point of View

BERNSTEIN, Charles, *Attack of the Difficult Poems. Essays and Inventions*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

And by Perloff

PERLOFF, Marjorie, *Poetry on & Off the Page. Essays for Emergent Occasions*. Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1998.

———, *Radical Artifice. Writing Poetry in the Age of Media*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1991.

The following is a more recent text by Perloff. It also discusses Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Samuel Beckett, John Ashbery, and, of course, John Cage:

———, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy. Rimbaud to Cage*. Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1981.

Translated into English by Mario Murgia.

"The boarder incident prerepeated itself": A Study in Conflict

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Terence Killeen

Study Assignments

- ► Read the chapter "James Joyce" by Bruce Stewart, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*. Pay special attention to the section on *Finnegans Wake*, and write an essay in which you discuss the following quotation from the source mentioned above: "reproduction and resurrection are ultimately the same -a view with which Aristotle concurs (as Joyce carefully recorded in an early notebook)."[1]

- ► In order to accomplish the task proposed before, you might need to read another critical source on the influence of Aristotle upon Joyce's writings. If that were the case, you might find Fran O'Rourke's "Joyce and Aristotle" useful. See the complete reference in the "Further Reading" section below.

[1] Bruce Stewart, "James Joyce", p. 140.

► Read the chapter "Joyce's Ellmann, Ellmann's Joyce" by Declan Kiberd, in *The Irish Writer and the World*. Then write a brief essay in which you discuss if Kiberd's analogies of postcoloniality may establish a dialogue with the ideas on borders and otherness presented by Terence Killeen in his article included in the present volume. Pay attention to both the potential similarities as well as differences that might emerge from this comparison.

► Find out about three Irish periodicals and newspapers that were famous during the first half of the twentieth century. Write a report about each one of them and, if possible, identify the names of at least two well-known writers who also published journalism in any of the sources you analysed.

► Look at the examples Terence Killeen gives (in his present article) of Joyce's use of Irish newspaper sources. What do they tell us about Joyce's method of converting newspaper items into the "language" of *Finnegans Wake*?

► Read Terence Killeen's "Lee Miller: Photographing Joycean Dublin (1946)". Think of how Killeen's analysis of Miller's photojournalism as well as Miller's photographs expand your views on the descriptions of Dublin you find in Joyce's writings. Choose one of the photographs included in the volume *Voices on Joyce*, and write a brief essay in which you relate the selected photo to a specific scene in one of Joyce's works.

Further Reading

ATTRIDGE, Derek and Marjorie Howes (eds.), *Semicolonial Joyce*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

CAMPBELL, Joseph and Henry Morton Robinson, *A Skeleton Key to* Finnegans Wake. New York, Harcourt Brace, 1944.

GIBSON, Andrew, *Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics and Aesthetics in* Ulysses. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002.

GORDON, John, *Finnegans Wake: A Plot Summary*. Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1986.

KIBERD, Declan, *The Irish Writer and the World*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 235-249.

KILLEEN, Terence, "Lee Miller: Photographing Joycean Dublin (1946)". *Voices on Joyce*. Anne Fogarty and Fran O'Rourke (eds.) Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 2015, pp. 133-138.

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O'ROURKE, Fran, "Joyce and Aristotle". *Voices on Joyce*. Anne Fogarty and Fran O'Rourke (eds.) Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 2015, pp. 139-157.

ORR, Leonard (ed.), *Joyce, Imperialism, and Postcolonialism*. Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 2008.

PLATT, Len, *Joyce, Race and* Finnegans Wake. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

STEWART, Bruce, "James Joyce". *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*. John Wilson Foster (ed.) Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 133-152.

Rewriting *Dubliners*: Parent-Child Relations in James Joyce's and Donal Ryan's 'Eveline'

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Hedwig Schwall

Study Assignments

Questions for discussion or composition:

1. Why is Joyce's *Dubliners* a model short story cycle?
2. Can Joyce's Eveline be described as traumatized? After having read Cathy Caruth's introduction to the phenomenon, what do you think?
3. In another article, I argue that Joyce's Eveline slides from neurotic into psychotic perception. Discuss whether you agree or not on the basis of Stijn Vanheule's *The Subject of Psychosis: A Lacanian Perspective*.
4. Do Eveline and Evelyn reflect the structures of hysteria as described by Elisabeth Bronfen in *The Knotted Subject. Hysteria and its Discontents*?
5. In Stijn Vanheule's *The Subject of Psychosis: A Lacanian Perspective* the categories of psychosis are clearly marked. Can you recognize them in Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*, *the* Irish novel which stages a psychotic protagonist?
6. (*A more difficult, creative assignment*): If you set a story involving Eveline/Evelyn in your own country, city, town… how would you "translate"

it? Explain which social, spatial, political, psychological, gender, aesthetic relations you would use.

Further Reading

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FELMAN, Soshana, *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight. Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture.* Cambridge, Massachussetts, Harvard University Press, 1987.

——————, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body. Don Juan with J. L. Austin or Seduction in Two Languages*. Redwood City, California, Stanford University Press, 2002.

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MANN, Susan Garland, *The Short Story Cycle. A Genre Companion and Reference Guide*. New York, Greenwood Press, 1988.

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VANHEULE, Stijn, *The Subject of Psychosis: A Lacanian Perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

VERHAEGHE, Paul, *Does the Woman Exist? From Freud's Hysteric to Lacan's Feminine.* Translated by Marc du Ry. London, Rebus Press, 1999.

"ALIGHT AND BURNT TO THE GROUND": FIRE AS A METAPHOR OF REWRITING IN *DUBLINERS 100* AND *SPILL SIMMER FALTER WITHER*

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CAROLINA ULLOA

Study Assignments

1. In her succinct study on Irish history, *Modern Ireland. A Very Short Introduction* (2003), historian Senia Pašeta approaches the complexities of the island by segmenting them into several inquiries—the Catholic question, land questions, and national questions. Her journey through Irish history begins with the Act of Union of 1901 and finishes while the Celtic Tiger period, which was still ongoing at the time of publication. In the course of her exploration, she arrives at the following conclusion:

> Contemporary Ireland is a modern and dynamic country whose booming economy remains a source of envy and wonder. The pace of change continues to astound visitors, especially those who knew Ireland before the Celtic Tiger began to roar. Unashamed expressions of once unthinkable heterodoxy in religious, sexual, and artistic matters are good indicators of the gradual but palpable decay of the social conservatism that once saturated the country. The first two decades of the 20th century brought Ireland independence, but the final two brought a social revolution whose consequences

> were probably even more far-reaching. They have shaped profoundly the contours of modern Irish life.[1]

The Celtic Tiger, as Elizabeth Cullingford suggests, ended in 2008.[2] By doing your own research on the Irish tensions that are suggested in Pašeta's division, determine if you agree with Pašeta's last statement in the context of 2020. If you concur, why and how would you explain it? If not, how has it changed from 2003 until today and what is Pašeta's assertion missing in the light of the years that have elapsed? Support your answer with textual evidence from contemporary literary examples.

2. Read Eimear McBride's "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," another short story in the collection *Dubliners 100* (ed. Thomas Morris), and reflect on the use of dialogue for the construction of the narrative tension. Afterwards, compare it to its hypotext in Joyce's *Dubliners*, explore by what means its respective tension is presented, and comment on whether or not it presents a political subtext. Keep in mind that, even if it was the case that both authors were commenting the same political situation, the time difference between the two short stories—and the fact that one is a rewriting of the other—implies a new approach toward it.

3. Crazy Mary, from Peter Murphy's "The Dead," expresses her concerns on female representation by criticizing Gabriel Conroy's male gaze on Gretta in Joyce's homonymous short story. By considering the importance of the female gaze on the current cultural and social arena, find another short story in *Dubliners 100* in which a subversion of the stereotypical female character is portrayed. In order to be able to do so, first read Linda Hutcheon's "Postmodernism and Feminism" to clarify this opposition. Afterwards, consult Patricia Coughlan's "Irish Literature and Feminism in Postmodernity" in order to concrete your answer in the specificity of the Irish context.

4. Listen to "The Lass of Aughrim" and elucidate how its allusion works for the constructions of Joyce's and Murphy's versions of "The Dead." Does it evoke the same sensations? Is it linked to the same characters? Does it carry similar implications?

5. Just as Gaston Bachelard has an essay on the element of fire in the Western tradition—*The Psychoanalysis of Fire*—he has a philosophical approximation to water in relation to dreams. One of the many reflections that this author proposes regarding fire is as a means of purification.

[1] Senia Pašeta, *Modern Ireland. A Very Short Introduction*, p. 145.

[2] Elizabeth Cullingford, "Emigration or Exile in Contemporary Irish Fiction?", in *Éire-Ireland*, p. 60.

However, in "Purity and Purification. Water and Morality," in *Water and Dreams. An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, he offers another perspective on this redemptive quality through the exploration of the element that gives the text its title. Compare the two approaches that Bachelard proposes and highlight the differences that each one has. Afterwards, connect the oneiric sequences related to Sara Baume's protagonist in *Spill Simmer Falter Wither* and the various instances in which water, in the form of the coast, is presented, specifically in the novel's final suggestion of his drowning.

6. Watch Elizabeth Gilbert's TED Talk "Your elusive creative genius," a conference that followed the success of her memoir *Eat, Pray, Love*. Problematize whether her notion "creative genius"[3] is accordant to a dominant discourse, in which she is assuming an all-encompassing position over her subject matter and reinforcing certain normative practices of her context, or whether it is an example of a local narrative, which aims at its own specificity.

7. After having watched Gilbert's TED Talk, read "'An artist, first and foremost": An Interview with Sara Baume,' in *Estudios Irlandeses*, and compare how both women writers approach their literary creation in the twenty-first century. Does any of their concerns have a common ground? If so, is it possible to observe this commonality in *Eat, Pray, Love* and *Spill Simmer Falter Wither*?

8. The postmodern condition underlies the central notions in Ulloa's article "'Alight and burnt to the ground': Fire as a Metaphor of Rewriting in *Dubliners 100* and *Spill Simmer Falter Wither*," found in part I in this book. By using terms such as Calinescu's "rewriting," Genette's "hypertextuality," and Hutcheon's "parody," the author aligns her approach with this movement and its aesthetics, which entails a skepticism towards critical and literary traditions and the questioning of previously standardized notions. Following this idea, would you say that Morris's *Dubliners 100* and Baume's *Spill Simmer Falter Wither* can be described as postmodern? Further your insights by consulting the third section of *International Postmodernism. Theory and Practice* (eds. Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema), "Renovations and Innovations in Postmodernist Writing."

9. In contemporary Irish fiction, one of the ways to continue the tradition of the Irish big house writing is via its use as a motif. Read Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* and Claire Keegan's "The Forester's Daugh-

[3] Elizabeth Gilbert, "Your elusive creative genius," in *TED Talks* [online].

ter," in *Walk the Blue Fields*, to decide whether these authors ascribe to this use of the tradition or not. If not, propose the fashion in which each author is appropriating said tradition. Pay special attention to the characters who perform the burning and what triggered it, keeping in mind that the Irish big house novel was first conceived as a genre which emanated from the Protestant and Catholic conflict for the territory.

10. Irish emigration to the United States, a fact that comes from the various periods of instability in Irish history, is frequently depicted in its literature. Find a contemporary Irish fiction in which this displacement occurs, such as Colm Tóibín's and Mary Costello's, and contrast it to the internal journey depicted in Baume's *Spill Simmer Falter Wither*, using emigration and travel literature as theoretical frameworks.

11. Based on the descriptions of the coast of Ireland in Baume's novel, look for a maritime painting (such as those by George Mounsey Atkinson) that echoes the protagonist's last moments of reflection while contemplating the sea in his final scene(s). Connect these representations of the sea to the sublime in the two pieces and argue in favor or against a reading related to the possible death of this character.

Further Reading

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WATERS, ISLANDS, AND INSULAR MINDS: CONNECTION AND DIVISION IN SEBASTIAN BARRY'S SLIGO NOVELS

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HEDDA FRIBERG-HARNESK

Study Assignments

Questions for discussion or composition:

1. What various mechanisms of ostracism do you see at work in Sebastian Barry's novels *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* and *The Secret Scripture*? Compare and discuss.
2. Discuss the institution of marriage as it emerges in Barry's novel *The Temporary Gentleman*.
3. Compare and discuss the relationships to nature of two or more of these characters: Eneas in *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty*; Roseanne in *The Secret Scripture*; Jack in *The Temporary Gentleman*, and Thomas in *Days Without End*.
4. Irish writer Elizabeth Bowen has remarked that "[n]othing is ever over in Ireland". The statement suggests, perhaps, that for generation after generation a violent past looms over, and threatens to smother, or corrupt, the present moment. In connection with Barry's *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* and *The Secret Scripture*, discuss the idea that the past is never over and done with in the Irish context.

5. How are Native Americans depicted in Barry's *Days Without End*? Although not highly visible in the novel, Afro-Americans, too, appear (see the Andersonville episode). Discuss Barry's depiction of these minorities.

Further Reading

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———————————┤, *Boss Grady's Boys*, in *Prayers of Sherkin; Boss Grady's Boys*. London, Methuen Drama, 1991.

———————————┤, *The Inherited Boundaries*. Mountrath, Dolmen, 1986.

V*A Long Long Way*. London, Faber & Faber, 2005.

———————————┤, *On Canaan's Side*. London, Faber & Faber, 2011.

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Humour and the Gods: Reshaping Traditions in *The Infinities* by John Banville

@

Aurora Piñeiro

Study Assignments

► It is frequently acknowledged that *Castle Rackrent* (1800) by Maria Edgeworth is the novel that established the conventions of an enduring literary genre: the Irish big house novel; while Elizabeth Bowen's modernist take on this tradition is said to have emphasised an exploration of the psychology of the main characters in the story, as it may be seen in *The Last September* (1929). According to Kreilkamp, "Bowen reveals how the costs of the Anglo-Irish experience express themselves more fully in the private consciousness of its young victims".[1] Bearing these ideas in mind, choose a topic from the following list and write an essay:

1. Read *The Last September* by Elizabeth Bowen and *The Infinities* by John Banville. Then write an essay where you analyse the way in which Banville pays tribute to the conventions of the Irish big house novel but, at the same time, establishes a critical distance with them.

[1] Vera Kreilkamp, "The Novel of the Big House", p. 72.

Focus your reading on the dominant tone and the endings in both novels.

2. Read *The Last September* by Elizabeth Bowen and *The Infinities* by John Banville. Then write an essay where you analyse and compare the role of the following female characters: Lois Farquar in *The Last September* and Petra Godley in *The Infinities*.

► Read *Amphitryon* (1807) by Heinrich von Kleist and *God's Gift* (2000) by John Banville. Do you believe that both plays may be classified as tragicomedies? Why? Write an essay in which you analyse the conventions of tragicomedies as a dramatic subgenre and discuss the way(s) in which these plays may be (or not) representative of this type of writing. Select at least two quotations from each play to support your ideas.

► Several postmodern novels rewrite classical myths. The presence of Greek deities and their imagined or actual interference with human affairs is a recurrent motif or theme that authors approach in varied ways. Select one of the options below to write an essay on either:

1. An analysis of the theme of identity and the adoption of masks in both *The Magus* (1965) by John Fowles and *The Infinities* (2009) by John Banville.
2. An analysis of the role of Hermes in *The Infinities*, from the perspective of the many functions attributed to this deity in Greek mythology and the way he is represented in Banville's postmodern parody.

► Samuel Beckett's prose is a cardinal influence on John Banville's writings. Read the following excerpt from the novel *Watt* (1945) by Beckett and relate these notions on laughter with the different forms of humour that are deployed in *The Infinities* by Banville.

"Of all the laughs that strictly speaking are not laughs, but modes of ululation, only three I think need detain us, I mean the bitter, the hollow and the mirthless. They correspond to successive, how shall I say successive… suc… successive excoriations of the understanding, and the passage from the one to the other is the passage from the lesser to the greater, from the lower to the higher, from the outer to the inner, from the gross to the fine, from the matter to the form. The laugh that now is mirthless once was hollow, the laugh that once was hollow once was bitter. And the laugh that once was bitter? Eyewater, Mr. Watt, eyewater. But do not let us

waste our time with that, do not let us waste any more time with that, Mr. Watt. No. Where were we. The bitter, the hollow and —Haw! Haw!— the mirthless. The bitter laugh laughs at that which is not good, it is the ethical laugh. The hollow laugh laughs at that which is not true, it is the intellectual laugh. Not good! Not true! Well well. But the mirthless laugh is the dianoetic laugh, down the snout —Haw!— so. It is the laugh of laughs, the *risus purus*, the laugh laughing at the laugh, the beholding, the saluting of the highest joke, in a word the laugh that laughs—silence please—at that which is unhappy."[2]

► Discuss the similitudes and differences between Latin American and Irish postmodern parodies:

1. Read the novel *El beso de la mujer araña* (1976) [*Kiss of the Spider Woman*] by Manuel Puig. Analyse the way in which Puig recontextualises the film *The Enchanted Cottage* (1945) by John Cromwell in his novel to both affirm and subvert the ideology of the filmic text.
2. Read *The Infinities* by John Banville. Analyse the way in which Banville recontextualises the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*circa* 1594-1596) by William Shakespeare in his own novel and how he takes advantage of the carnivalesque elements, the identity confusion, and the mingling of human and supernatural characters in Shakespeare's play for the purposes of his prose work. At the same time, think of how Banville distances from the views on male dominance present in the Elizabethan play.
3. Write an essay in which you compare the parodic strategies used by both Puig and Banville in their postmodern renderings of previous art works.

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Filmography

The Enchanted Cottage. Directed by John Cromwell, and screenplay by DeWitt Bodeen and Herman J. Mankiewicz. USA, RKO Radio Pictures, 1945.

The Last September. Directed by Deborah Warner, and screenplay by John Banville. France/UK/Ireland/ USA, Matrix Films, Scala Thunder, Bórd Scannán na hÉireann (RTÉ), British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB), British Screen Productions, IMA Productions, Canal +, 1999.

WRITING(S) AND REWRITING(S). DOUBLE AND MULTIPLE TRADITIONS IN THE FICTION OF ÉILÍS NÍ DHUIBHNE

@

GIOVANNA TALLONE

Study Assignments

Questions for discussion or composition:

1. How does Éilís Ní Dhuibhne exploits the folklore tradition in her short stories?
2. Discuss Ní Dhuibhne's use of the novel vis-à-vis the short story.
3. What literary genres can be detected in the structure of Ní Dhuibhne's novels *The Bray House* and *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*?
4. How are women depicted in Ní Dhuibhne's short stories? Take into account the collections *Blood and Water* and *Eating Women is not Recommended*.
5. Discuss the urban landscape and the urban community in the collection *The Shelter of Neighbours*.
6. Analyse the intertextual features of the novel *Fox, Swallow, Scarecrow*.
7. Éilís Ní Dhuibhne said in an interview that she wants to be the historian of the life of her time. Comment this statement on the basis of her use of tradition and folklore.

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Biscuits at Grandma's and Other Family Horrors: Hansel and Gretel in *The Gathering* by Anne Enright

Ana Elena González Treviño

Study Assignments

1. Discuss Enright's decision to tell the story from the perspective of a first-person narrator. How would the story have worked with an omniscient narrator? Is subjectivity essential towards the conveyance of this type of topic?
2. The stream of consciousness as narrative technique allows the narrator to tell stories within stories about the many members of her family. How do the multiple character sketches add up to explain the main topic of the novel?
3. Fairy tales have been used as templates for psychological exploration and healing. How does a stylistically elaborate literary form such as that adopted by Enright in *The Gathering* make use of folklore, if at all?
4. The legal typification of child abuse and retroactive justice is still a very acrimonious topic. Can fiction have an impact? Describe ways in which it can as well as its limitations.
5. In addition to child abuse, motherhood recurrently appears to be the focus of much reflection in the novel. Ada, Mrs. Hegarty, and Veronica herself represent different types of motherhood. Establish a comparison

between the three, including the impact of economic circumstances on their lives.

Further reading

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SARA BAUME is an Irish artist who lives in West Cork. Her first novel, *Spill Simmer Falter Wither*, was published in 2015, and the second one, *A Line Made by Walking*, in 2017. Her work has won the Davy Byrne's Short Story Award, the Hennessy New Irish Writing Award, the Rooney Prize, an Irish Book Award, and the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize. *handiwork* (2020) was her non-fiction debut, an art project that has given birth to a second on-going one, under the title *Wisdom*, from which an extract is included in the present volume.

MARY COSTELLO is from the west of Ireland. Her short story collection, *The China Factory* (2012) was nominated for the Guardian First Book Award the Irish Book Awards. Her first novel, *Academy Street*, won the Irish Novel of the Year and the Irish Book of the Year in 2014 and was shortlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award, the Costa First Novel Award and the EU Prize for Literature. *The River Capture*, her second novel, was published in 2019 and was shortlisted for the Irish Novel of the Year, the Kerry Fiction Award and the Dalkey Prize for Fiction. An excerpt from this second novel is included in the present volume.

JORGE FONDEBRIDER is an Argentinian poet, critic and translator. His published poetry books are *Elegías* (1983), *Imperio de la Luna* (1987), *Standards* (1993), *Los últimos tres años* (2006) and *La extraña trayectoria de la luz. Poemas reunidos 1983-2013* (2016). A selection of his works has been translated into English (*The Spaces Between*, an anthology translated by Richard Gwyn - Meirion House, Glan yr afon, Wales, U.K., Cinnamon Press, 2013) and into Swedish (*De Tre Senaste Aren*, translated by Martin Uggla - Malmö, Sweden, Siesta Förlag, 2015). He is also an essayist and editor. He is an active promoter of Irish culture in Latin America and introduced to a wide Spanish speaking audience authors as Anthony Cronin (*Dead as Doornails*), Claire Keegan (*Antarctica*, *Walk the Blue Fields* and *Foster*), Joseph O'Connor (*Ghost Light*) and Moya Cannon (an anthology of her poetry). Together with Gerardo Gambolini, he selected and translated the texts from *Poesía irlandesa contemporánea* (1999), the first bilingual anthology of contemporary Irish poetry published in a Spanish speaking country; also, a book on the Ulster cycle, a collection of Irish traditional short stories, a book on Anglo-Scottish ballads and *Peter Street & otros poemas* (2008), by the Irish poet Peter Sirr.

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CLAIRE KEEGAN was raised on a farm on the Wicklow/Wexford border. Her stories are translated into more than twenty languages. *Antarctica* (1999) won the Rooney Prize for Irish Literature and was chosen as a *Los Angeles Times* Book of the Year. *Walk the Blue Fields* (2007) won the Edge Hill Prize for the finest collection of stories published in the British Isles.

Foster (2010) won the Davy Byrnes Award —then the world's richest prize for a story—and was recently named by *The Times UK* as one of the top 50 novels to be published in the 21st Century. Her stories have been published in the *New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, *Granta*, and *Best American Stories*. Keegan is now holding the Briena Staunton Fellowship at Pembroke College, Cambridge. Her new novel, *Small Things Like These*, will be published by Faber/Grove in the autumn (2021). An excerpt from this novel is included in the present volume.

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PÍA LABORDE-NOGUEZ obtained a BA in Acting from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London. She's worked primarily for the stage, but has also explored film. Stage: *Trust* (2018), Gate Theatre, (Lead actor); *The House of Bernarda Alba* (2017-2018), Cervantes Theatre, (as Amelia); *Glorious!* (2018), Frinton Theatre Festival, (as Maid). Films: *Landscapes* (2018), Rodrigo Cervantes, dir. (as Valeria); *Control* (2018), Tom Tennant, dir. (as Sofia); *Tilda and Laila* (2017), Alexandra Brodski, dir. (as Tilda). Pía Laborde-Noguez performed (as the Girl) in the Spanish staging of Annie Ryan's adaptation of *A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing*, originally the debut novel of Irish writer Eimear McBride. *Una niña es una cosa a medio formar* was the first staging launched by *Dolores*, and it premiered at the Tamayo Contemporary Art Museum in 2019, in Mexico City.

Mario Murgia is a poet, literary translator, and full professor of English, Translation, and Comparative Literature at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He participated in the first-ever Mexican edition of James Joyce's *Dubliners* (2015), which adds to his various Spanish translations of the poetry, drama, and prose of authors such as Barry Callaghan, Robert Graves, Edgar Allan Poe, Adrienne Rich, and Dylan Thomas, among many others. His most recent books are *Singularly Remote. Essays on Poetries* and the poetry collection *El mundo perdone* (*May the World Forgive*). His poetical works have appeared in publications such as *Caminos Inciertos* (Spain), *Emanations: Second Sight* (USA), *The Battersea Review* (USA), and *The Milton Quarterly* (USA-UK).

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Rewriting traditions. Contemporary Irish Fiction fue realizado por la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la UNAM, se terminó de producir en mayo de 2021 en la Editora Seiyu de México S.A. de C.V. Tiene un formato de publicación electrónica enriquecida, exclusivo de la colección eSchola así como salida a impresión por demanda. Se utilizó en la composición, realizada por F1 Servicios Editoriales S. C., la familia tipográfica completa Century Schoolbook en diferentes puntajes y adaptaciones. La totalidad del contenido de la presente publicación es responsabilidad del autor, y en su caso, corresponsabilidad de los coautores y del coordinador o coordinadores de la misma. El cuidado de la edición estuvo a cargo de Editora Seiyu de México y de Dánae Montero Alejandri.





Image on endguards and cover: Anonymous. Photograph of an inscribed stone at the entrance to the monolithic monument of Newgrange, Ireland (2007). The image belongs to the public domain.

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The literary landscape of contemporary Irish fiction is an extraordinary one; it is vital, multifarious and difficult to label. Within the multiplicity that characterises this narrative universe, we find copious examples of novels and short stories that are rewritings of previous and well-known pieces. The notion of rewriting –and its varied embodiments– is the guiding principle in this book, which is divided into three main parts. Part I gathers nine articles by scholars who approach the multiple strategies deployed by Irish writers when they aim at resignifying literary traditions, modes or strategies in their contemporary (re)appropriations of the past. Part II approaches the notion of rewriting from the perspectives of literary translation and performance, and includes excerpts from works by Mary Costello, Claire Keegan and Sarah Baume. Part III offers readers a selection of self-study exercises and further readings that expands the central views discussed in this volume. *Rewriting Traditions* encourages dialogues on creativity and rewriting in relation to the unlimited cartographies of contemporary Irish fiction.

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